黙示録アリス

Apocalypse Alice

No. 3

The illness of a girl ending the world.

鏡貴也

Takaya Kagami

ILLUSTRATION／加藤勇樹（アークシステムワークス）

Yuki Kato

ファンタジア文庫

黙示録アリス
Apocalypse Alice
The silence of a girl ending the world

真琴
火城白
ザッキー
三友孔雀
有栖真之介

「いまから私たちは、世界でも最も難度の高い、
《黙示録アリス》の攻略を開始します。
ここを攻略しきれば、世界は私たちのものになる。
準備はいいですか？」

Prologue - The Seed that Upheaves the World

A voice sounds from afar.

"Onii-chan."

It's the voice of my little sister Saki.

"Hey hey Onii-chan you hear me?"

But I'm feeling sleepy so I ignore it. I can't open my eyes. I wonder why I'm so sleepy.

"Onii-chan hey!"

What is it Saki? I'm sleepy. Don't wake me up.

"You can't do that Onii-chan. You're sleeping too much."

It's fine right? I'm sleepy. I'll be skipping school today. Ah, but, you have to make sure you go, you know?

"What are you talking about? C'mon, open your eyes. Get a grip on yourself."

I don't want to.

"You can't do that ~! C'mon c'mon, I'll give you a hand, so get up!"

Impossible.

"Jeez ~, you're really such a handful, Onii-chan. Open your eyes and face me. Before it's too late."

..... too late? What are you talking about?

"Onii-chan hey, you have been out cold for a month now you know?

--- Inside the labyrinth of a girl called Gunjou-san.

--- Ever since you have been stabbed in the chest with a sword by some woman called Kiri-san."

What.

"But if you continue sleeping like this, you will get killed.....

So hurry up,

Even for just a second,

Even for just an instant,

Onii-chan, wake up!"

On hearing those words ---

I awake from my blissful dream.

Chapter 1 - Towards the Inside of Blue

"Saki!"

I yell out the name of my little sister, and open my eyes.

But there's no way my little sister would be here.

Since she has become the world's most difficult labyrinth of rank 666 and disappeared from this world 10 years ago.

Thus, that was just a dream.

An illusion.

But, as before, I am still inside a labyrinth.

A labyrinth brought forth by Gunjou.

There is no one before me.

Shiro, Himi, Yousuke, Kiri and Kansai's Valor Team aren't here.

Only I am left lying in this wide room that seems to have become deserted.

I sit up.

"..... kuh."

My head hurts.

I don't even know how long I have been unconscious here. If I were to believe the words of my little sister inside my dream, then I should have been sleeping here for a month.

"There's no fool who would believe the words said inside a dream, is there?"

In the first place, this isn't a place where one could remain unconscious for a month. This isn't a place where one could remain alive for even a second without using high level magic.

Then, does that mean I have only been out for an instant?

"..... what on earth has happened?"

I murmur.

I look down at the wound in my chest where Kiri stabbed. For some reason, the wound has been closed. I know not what kind of magic was placed on me through Kiri's sword. Did she stab me with the intent to kill me? Or did she stab me just for the sake of stopping my movements?

Whichever way it was, she betrayed us.

She's a traitor.

But she said 'sorry' while she was on the verge of tears.

She kept saying 'sorry' again and again.

The moment a traitor cries the instant he turns traitorous, he has failed as a traitor so, whether or not she can be called a traitor I do not know.

Anyway, I don't know anything right now.

"Jeez, what kind of situation am I in right now?"

I look around me but there really isn't anyone here.

The only thing I can see is the dried-up blood poured all over the floor by the Valor Team when they used it against Gunjou as her weakness.

"....."

When I was still conscious, the floor should have been splashed with tons of blood.

In other words, some amount of time has passed since then.

I remember the words said by my little sister Saki in my dream.

One month has passed --- that's what my little sister had said. There's no reason I should believe that, but at any rate, I have to raise my tension. Because inside the labyrinth, the instant I'm clueless about my situation is the instant I would lose my life.

Shall I **Escape**?

Should I **Escape**?

But at that moment, I hear a strong sound from behind me.

No, it's a strange voice.

"Yaah yaah."

The voice says.

I turn towards that voice.

Upon doing that, I see a white rabbit standing at a short distance away from me. A rabbit in a suit that has a heart mark finely woven into it.

In its left hand, it holds a pocket watch.

I know that rabbit. It is the same strange rabbit that appears in the illustrations of the 'Alice in Wonderland' that I used to read with my little sister.

While checking its pocket watch, the rabbit says.

"Yaah yaah, Mr. Human, it's time."

"What time?"

I ask, to which the rabbit says.

"Time to die."

The rabbit jumps towards me. Sharp claws appear in its right hand.

Its movement is abnormally fast.

I have already activated my **H e a d p h o n e F u z z 《Intra-Cerebral Magic Activator》** s[1], but I have not played my **Acceleration** switch. What I'm playing is **Escape**switch. My **Escape** switch has yet to complete. On top of that, maybe because I've just awakened, my body reactions are no good.

"..... ugh."

The attack will probably hit me.

I'll be activating my **Escape** as I received the attack.

In other words, if I don't receive a fatal wound, it'd be my win, but the rabbit's claws are terribly fast. It's aiming straight for my head. It's like I can't dodge it at all. Will it slice my carotid artery, or send my head flying?

I protect my head with my left arm.

"Damn, I'll let you take my arm."

Even if I am to lose my arm, it's better than dying.

The **Escape** song reverberates in my head.

The **Escape** song starts.

Just as the claws are about to harvest my arm, behind the rabbit, another rabbit that has been hidden jumps out.

I look at it.

My eyes widen.

The other is aiming for my heart and I have no way to deal with that.

It's the end.

I'll die.

My **Escape** has yet to complete.

But even so, trying to avoid a fatal wound, I roll on the floor in an unsightly manner.

"Uwu, Uwooooooooooh!?"

I let out a cry as I operate my muscles, trying to survive.

Even though it's useless.

Even though either my neck or heart will get sliced apart.

The faster claws of the rabbit are about to reach my neck.

No good.

It's the end.

The end is coming too easily.

I stop hollering. Smirking with half-opened eyes. I'm amazed at my own weakness and worthlessness.

Then,

"Sorry Saki."

The moment I murmur the name of my little sister softly.

The claws touches my neck.

About to rip open my carotid artery.

Just before that happens.

"Hn."

The voice of a girl appears right next to me.

She catches hold of the faces of the two rabbits with her small hands. And with that, she throws them far away.

I was saved by someone.

The rabbits are blown away.

Right as they are blown away, they divide.

Four rabbits deliberately take out their pocket watches and say at the same time.

""Yaah yaah Mr. Human, it's time.""

But I can't see those rabbits. Since my eyes have been taken in by the figure of the girl who has appeared right before them.

""It's time to die.""

Right before my eyes, is a petite girl who's probably at the height of about 150 cm.

She has blond hair. And is wearing the sailor uniform of Kichijouji High.

Her almond-shaped eyes, both left and right, are flickering red and blue respectively.

She's like a puppet, hung from a black gigantic hand resembling that of the devil.

I know the name of that girl.

"Gunjou!?"

I call that name, and she takes a glance at me.

It's really Gunjou.

Mizuiro Gunjou.

As before, her face is vacant, lonely, and sad.

She has contracted the labyrinth disease.

The rabbits in mid-air say.

""Time to die, time to die, time to die, time to die.""

Claws appear in their right hands at the same time.

But Gunjou crosses both her hands upwards. Upon doing that, countless orbs appear. And they start spinning.

It's **Sea Moon Wheel** switch.

She uses this magic to put down her enemies.

The **Sea Moon Wheel**s attack the rabbits all at once. The rabbits look at them,

"Aah, scary scary."

They say while dodging, but they failed to dodge them and are split apart.

The four rabbits are split cleanly into two and disappear.

Gunjou is strong.

Since she has become an eternal labyrinth.

But, why is Gunjou, who should be the one who has brought forth this labyrinth, fighting the rabbits?

Does that mean those rabbits aren't soldiers created by Gunjou?

Rabbits appear again at the entrance of this hall.

This time, there are five.

"Hn."

Gunjou looks in their direction. She raises both hands again. She does not activate her 《**Headphone Fuzz**》 worn on her ear. Without her 《**Headphone Fuzz**》, she conjures her **Sea Moon Wheel** switch.

She sends her jellyfish flying.

Slicing the rabbits apart.

Slicing apart.

Slicing apart.

When I look closely, it's like Gunjou is getting rid of the rabbits to protect me.

Her skirt and uniform are in tatters. They are all bloodied.

Even her thighs and arms are also covered in wounds.

I look at that and say.

"..... don't tell me, you've been protecting me....."

A single rabbit slip past the jellyfish and is about to close in on me.

By this time, I'm already in the state where I can deal with them.

I activate two magics in my brain.

Acceleration switch.

Demon Sword switch.

With these two magics activated, I can surpass god for an instant.

But there isn't any need for me to activate my magic.

Gunjou hurriedly comes back to where I am, and grabs the rabbit's face.

"Hn!"

She utters and flings the rabbit sending it flying. At that moment, Gunjou's face is close to me. I peer into her eyes.

As usual, they are vacant, and look lonely and sad. Her emotions are faint.

"Fuh, fuh, fuh."

She is short on breath. I can clearly tell that she is breathing heavily, and has shed lots of blood and sweat. And holding her ground with her slender legs, she immediately turns around towards the rabbits.

Raising her slender hands.

Conjuring up her **Sea Moon Wheel** switch.

Slashing the rabbits.

I don't know what's happening. I have no idea why Gunjou is fighting the rabbits that are supposed to have been brought forth by herself.

However, I only know that she is desperately protecting me.

Covered in blood.

Covered in dirt.

Having contracted the labyrinth disease.

But yet, she is protecting me.

"....."

If one month had really passed like what Saki said in the dream, then,

"..... seems like I've racked up a load of debt, though I wasn't able to see your face."

I murmur softly.

The rabbit assault stops for a while.

But Gunjou continues to have her back towards me, without relaxing her guard.

I call out to her.

"Hey Gunjou."

"....."

"Gunjou."

"....."

"Are you conscious?"

"....."

"Why're you protecting me? You should hate me right?"

"....."

She does not answer.

Because of the labyrinth disease. In order to talk to her heart, there's no other way but to enter her heart with magic.

I approach her. And stand before her. Gunjou just looks at the entrance to the hall. Looking out for any incoming rabbits.

I stoop my body a little, and peer into her eyes in order to cut her gaze off.

Instantly, she reacts.

She looks at me,

"..... uwu..... ah, uwu."

She utters, but only that. She looks as if she is about to complain about something for a moment, but that's all to it.

Her face returns to a vacant look.

She does not attack.

She does not attack me.

Her beautiful face is smeared with blood. The blood probably belongs to her. Her neck is also hurt.

She got hurt while protecting me.

On seeing that, I say in an exasperated voice.

"..... don't tell me, that you're thinking of me as your comrade?"

"....."

"That's why you're protecting me?"

"....."

"You know, you have the labyrinth disease right? You have to attack me right? Since you are no longer human, you should lose your consciousness and become a proper monster hey."

"....."

"Otherwise....."

I grab the shoulders of Gunjou. Her body is slender. She is so slender that it looks like she will break if I apply too much strength into my hands.

Did she keep on protecting me with such a body all by herself? And how long has that been?

When I touched her, her body quivered a bit, but as before, she did not attack me. She's merely keeping her alert towards the entrance to the hall.

I look hard at that Gunjou, contorting my face that was on the verge of tears, I say.

"..... otherwise, doesn't that mean that all the labyrinth diseased girls who have been disposed by the humans, have all retained their consciousness all the while until they were disposed?"

That would be the most dreadful truth.

I would have at least hoped that they were monsters with their consciousness swallowed up by the disease in the instant they were disposed.

But I already knew otherwise.

During the time when I killed Asahi Momoka with my **Holy Sword** switch, I had entered her heart and I knew then.

Asahi Momoka was a good kid.

She didn't want to kill her family and friends and said that she wanted me to quickly kill her. She even went as far as to thank me for killing her.

Labyrinth diseased girls retain their consciousness as they are being turned into labyrinths.

I stare at Gunjou.

I stare at my classmate who has been frantically protecting me despite having manifested the labyrinth disease.

I look hard at my comrade of the same Hero Team that I'm on,

"..... what the hell are you all? Shiro, Himi, and Yousuke are also like that though..... things like comrades and friends are suffocating to me."

"....."

"We are strangers right? We are all strangers. In that case..... in that case, you should have abandoned me easily!"

I bellow, taking advantage of the fact that Gunjou won't respond.

As before, she does not react.

With her vacant, lonely, sad eyes, she merely stares at the entrance to the hall.

I look hard at her. I look hard at the Gunjou who has been protecting me all this while.

"....."

Following that, I snap my fingers three times. And activate my 《**Headphone Fuzz**》.

In my head, the cursed song of the magic that might allow me to wrench the disease out of the heart of a diseased girl plays.

The magic completes in my brain.

My neural matter throbs.

【*Deceiving the night♪*

Beguiling the world♪
The darkness that saves the girl of the endless night♪】

"**Holy Sword** switch ---"

I say.

A silver sword appears in my right hand. Shrouded by light, a shining sword. A sword of hypocrisy that resembles a sword that a hero carries.

But the hand that holds that sword trembles. Of course. Because only until recently, this sword is an incomplete magic that can only be used to kill girls.

Thus,

"..... if you see me as a comrade that strongly..... if you are risking your life to save me..... it makes me afraid to use this you know, Gunjou."

I say in a trembling voice.

According to the craftsman who had developed this sword, Liezel Baimeister, in theory, this sword is complete, but I don't know whether or not I can believe that.

Because I have yet to test it out.

If I test it out here, I'd be performing human experimentation.

If it doesn't go well, Gunjou will die.

Just like how Asahi Momoka died.

The hand that is holding the **Holy Sword** is shaking in fear.

Should I thrust this into Gunjou, or should I give up on that? I don't know the answer to that.

But, if I don't save her here, she will probably be reigning here as an eternal labyrinth diseased girl forever. If she becomes an eternal labyrinth, the difficulty increases by ten times.

Rank 420.

If I let this chance go, it probably won't come back. In the first place, there's no place on earth that's conducting research on how to save labyrinth diseased girls.

The world has concluded that it is better to kill or make use of labyrinth diseased girls rather than saving them.

Thus, if I don't save her here, it'd be the end.

It'd be the end for Gunjou.

You can call it a miracle for me to be right beside her right now.

The only time to save her is now.

The only time to save her is none other than now.

But,

"Maybe it's my ego saying that.....?"

She does not reply.

"Will you go to the extent of risking death to become a normal girl?"

She does not answer.

"If you don't want to, please tell me. Please attack me. I don't want to carry the burden of your death."

But she does not react. Even as I show her the **Holy Sword**, she does not attack me.

But her eyes are slightly moist with tears.

However,

"I don't get the meaning of those tears....."

Which is it?

She doesn't want to die?

Or she wants to be saved?

I don't know. I don't know at all.

Thus it all rests with me.

I grimace,

"Damn. How did it become like this? If it were some other girl, I would still be able to bear with it. If I were testing this on another labyrinth diseased girl..... If I never knew the face, it won't matter this much; if it's a girl I don't know, it won't be so painful."

"....."

"You are all so cruel. Even when I keep telling you guys that I don't need any friends."

"....."

"Why did you all get so close to me?"

"....."

Tears flow from the eyes of the expressionless Gunjou.

But as before, I do not know the meaning behind that.

--- is she asking me not to kill her?

Or.

--- to save her?

I gripped my **Holy Sword** tightly.

I might be able to save Gunjou, or I might just kill her; I gripped my sword tightly.

And say.

"I'm afraid, I'm afraid..... of being the one to decide on your fate on my own. But I've decided. Since I'm arrogant..... be it as a friend, as a comrade or a classmate, or whether is it because I want to see that high and mighty angry face of yours again, I want to return you back to normal for these unreasonable selfish reasons....."

I raise my **Holy Sword**.

Gunjou reacts to that.

She looks up, not at the sword, but at me.

I look down at her,

"I shall save you."

After making such a proclamation, I thrust my **Holy Sword** switch into her neck.

♦

In the next instant.

With the power of the **Holy Sword**, I enter the depths of her heart.

The feeling is not much different from the time when I pushed myself into the heart of Asahi Momoka. Up till this point, I still do not know whether the **Holy Sword** is completed or not.

"....."

The inside of Gunjou is also made up of darkness.

A dark darkness.

Gunjou is sitting alone in the corner of that dark darkness.

With her legs folded against her chest.

The same as Asahi Momoka.

I grow anxious. Can I really save her? Or will I end up killing her with this sword?

I move to where Gunjou is, standing before her. And call out to her.

"Gunjou."

But she doesn't look up.

"Gunjou, look at me."

She then answers.

"..... I can't."

"Why?"

"Because I'm crying right now..... and it's embarrassing."

"Why're you crying?"

On hearing that question, Gunjou replies.

"..... y-your voice....."

"You heard?"

"..... yeah."

"You're damn annoying."

"What!? You are the one who's annoying right!"

She then looks up angrily at me. Her face is a little red. She really has been crying. While tears flow from her almond-shaped eyes, she glowers at me.

Strong-willed, and yet terribly weak.

That's Mizuiro Gunjou.

I say.

"Why did you break out into the disease? It's really bothersome."

"..... i-it's not like I want to break out into the disease hey! And I don't remember asking you to come save me."

"I'm not here to save you."

"Eh!? B-But, just now....."

"That was a lie. A joke. If you get deceived so easily by a man's words, you can't get away even if you're a slut."

"What, s-slu..... jeeeeeeez, fine! If you're not here to save me, then what did you come here for! Hurry up and go home!"

I look down at her angry face. It's the face I want to see most if I manage to save her.

That moronic face of hers that gets angry when she gets teased.

Gunjou becomes a little bashful from my gaze, pouts her lips and says.

"Wh-What..... what are you staring down at?"

"I was thinking 'oh my, you really are a midget huh'."

"I'll kill you!"

I smirk. I then sigh and say.

"..... kidding. I'm chagrined to say this, but I'm here to save you."

"Ah....."

"But let me say this first, I don't know whether I'm able to save you. My magic might not be complete yet and I might end up killing you just like what happened to Asahi Momoka."

Gunjou looks at the short knife that has the shape of a sword in my hand.

During the time when I killed Asahi Momoka, she was just right beside me so she should have seen what happened.

Gunjou says.

"Shinnosuke, you said you were afraid."

I did say that.

"You said you were afraid to kill me."

I nod honestly.

"I'm afraid. Frankly, I don't want to be responsible for your life. That's why I've said this before. Don't get close to me. I don't have time to fuss over you in this kind of place."

"But, you came to save me."

"It was because Shiro was annoyingly adamant about it."

That's a lie.

Shiro was against it.

Himi too was against it.

Yousuke too was against it.

And as for Kiri, she has time and again warned me against entering this labyrinth.

Aah, that's right..... I remember.

Kiri didn't want to betray us. She knew something like this would happen. Like I thought, she failed as a traitor.

But, that doesn't matter right now.

It started from me. I came here to save Gunjou. The truth is I must save my little sister, but despite that, I made pointless comrades, created weaknesses, and ended up coming here to save Gunjou.

I failed as a big brother.

I look hard at Gunjou and say.

"The amount of time the **Holy Sword** can remain activated is limited. We don't have much time. So....."

"Are you going to kill me?"

"I want to save you. But I might fail."

"Uhn."

"The chance of failure is probably higher. Since I have yet to save anyone with this yet."

"Uhn."

"But still....."

However, cutting me off, Gunjou says.

"It's fine. I'll go with whatever you've decided, Shinnosuke-kun."

"....."

I look hard at Gunjou.

While crying, she smiles bashfully. And she says again.

"..... I'll go with whatever you've decided. Be it die or saved, it's fine whichever way. But before that, tell me one thing."

"What?"

"What are you fighting for? What kind of purpose is the magic of that sword meant for? Why are you risking your life to study in this school?"

On hearing that question, I reply.

"I have no obligation to tell you....."

"Tell me. I might die right?"

"....."

"Besides, you already know everything about me right?"

She says bashfully.

She's right, I know. I took the class. A labyrinth diseased girl loses her privacy and human rights. Be it her height and weight, or her hobbies and interests. Her reason to be alive. Even secrets about herself that she doesn't know get publicized.

I know even the truth about her being taken from an orphanage by the Mitsutomo group and raised for their own purposes.

I say.

"I know even the cup size of your breasts. They are minus G right?"

Gunjou's eyes become upturned. But she doesn't protest against that. She merely looks intently at me,

"As the one..... who might kill me, tell me about yourself."

She says.

I don't know what is the point to that. It's the end once she dies.

Then, what if she lives? She'll become even more of a bother. She will probably want to help me. That's the kind of person she is. A good girl. That's why I came to save her. Since unlike me, she's someone who deserves to survive.

"If I tell you, will you leave me alone after that?"

"I don't think that's possible."

"Then I won't say."

"Shinnosuke."

"Hn?"

Gunjou then looks up at me,

"If I got saved..... if I managed to survive this..... then I'll be the one to save you next, so please tell me!"

She puffs her minus G cups out as she says that. Those breasts seem like they might very well be C-cups and she may not be the breastless chest that I've stated.

I look at her and say.

"The one who's being saved right now is you. Don't get too conceited."

She then replies.

"I can say the same to you; it's not a given that you will save me, so don't get too conceited."

"Hn ~"

"Besides, I had spent quite a long time protecting you while you were out cold. I was the one who saved you first."

"Are you calling me to repay my debt?"

"Precisely."

"You ain't cute at all."

"I don't care about whether you find me cute or not!"

"Aah jeez, your screeching is really irritating."

I stuff my ears and say.

But Gunjou takes another step forward, and glares up at me with her small, cute face.

"Then hurry up and say it! Say it and it'd make you feel better. What are you fighting against!?"

On hearing that question, I start to answer but hesitate. Then, I remember what Shiro said some time back.

"You can enter it alone and die by yourself. Or, maybe, it'd be fine for you to put up your solitary airs and achieve your grand ambition. At any rate, it's probably an ambition you can achieve by yourself, right?"

Conquering my little sister --- Apocalypse Alice, is not something I can achieve by myself.

But, as the rewards that can be reaped from clearing Apocalypse Alice are way too huge, I've never thought it was impossible to get real allies.

I thought that the only way to enter Apocalypse Alice was to hire mercenaries without anyone suspecting that my true intent of raiding it was to save my little sister.

But,

"....."

Gunjou will probably become my comrade, I suppose.

If I am able to save her life here, she will probably be willing to risk her life and raid Apocalypse Alice with me. I already knew that she's that kind of person. No, both of us have already been risking our lives for each other in absurd situations. I already know that, even in the most dangerous of situations, we won't betray each other.

In that case, it's fine to tell her.

More like, I should tell her.

I should pluck up the courage to tell her.

If I really want to save my little sister.

"..... ah."

I say.

Gunjou looks up at me and nods.

"Yeah."

She is looking at me with really earnest eyes. Even though death is before her, she still nestles close to me. Looking straight at me. Her gaze is so forthright that it's dazzling. The place she lives in is different from mine. Way too different.

But I am probably drawn to that dazzle of hers. That's why I made a mistake and came here. That's probably true for Kiri as well. If she wasn't drawn to it, she wouldn't have cried and apologized.

Both Kiri and I just can't help but be drawn to Gunjou and Shiro.

I avert my eyes from that dazzling girl and say.

"..... I don't really want to say. I have never talked about my own weakness to anyone before."

"Yeah."

"Besides, if I can't save you despite telling you....."

Then I'd probably be really hurt. If there's one thing that's horrible about humans, it's that they won't get hurt if things happen within their expectations. If they set their expectations to take into account that things won't always go well and that the worst could happen, then they won't get hurt.

Thus, you get hurt when you look upon the light. When you have hopes for the future. And if those hopes are betrayed, you get hurt.

However, as if she has seen through everything, Gunjou says.

"Shinnosuke."

"Yeah."

"Don't run away."

But still, I can't say it.

I merely say,

"..... if you survive, I'll use you."

I say.

But she looks intently at me,

"Then, does that mean that you'd tell me if I survive?"

"....."

"It's a promise okay?"

"I didn't promise anything."

"All right! Well then, I'll definitely survive!"

"I said I never agreed to anything."

But, ignoring me, she presses her hand against her chest and says.

"Then, I shall make you tell me your troubles! Yes, I shall do it. I'll do it do it do it ! I won't die! I'll do my best! I shall show the world who I am!"

"By the way, who are you?"

"I am Mizuiro....."

"Minus G-cup vomit girl?"

"I'll kiii

The surrounding darkness disappears.

I am driven out from the depths of her heart ---

♦

Once again, I return to the labyrinth.

The labyrinth brought forth by Gunjou.

"....."

This is different from the time when I killed Asahi Momoka. Back then, the labyrinth disappeared upon killing her.

But, the labyrinth remains this time.

Is is it because I have succeeded in severing the labyrinth disease away from the diseased girl? Or is it because Gunjou had become an eternal labyrinth, and consequently is different from Asahi Momoka who was a time-limited labyrinth?

I don't know.

"Gunjou?"

I call her name.

And look around me.

And there she is, lying down at a short distance away.

Slender legs extend from her skirt. Sailor uniform stained with blood. Blond hair.

She is deathly still.

"Gunjou."

I call her name again. I am too afraid to approach. I might have killed her. Thus,

"Gunjou!"

I call her name again with a slightly louder voice, but she still doesn't move.

I can feel my heart thumping wildly. I feel nauseous. Despair whirls in my head. That's why I said that. That's why I said that I didn't want to get close and familiar with others.

I approach her. If she's dead, I'll **Escape** immediately. There's nothing else for me to go on.

I get right next to Gunjou.

She still doesn't move. With her eyes closed, there's no sign of life on her face. My hand start towards her pale neck. As I extend my hand to search for a pulse ---

In that instant.

"Waah!"

Gunjou's raises both her hands and shouts at me.

"....."

I jerk in surprise and stop moving.

Gunjou then holds her stomach and laughs.

"That face! Were you surprised? Did you think I was dead? There's no way that this very Mizuiro Gunjou will die so easily right!"

Seems like she's alive.

And to top that, she's strangely animated, in a healthy way.

I look down at that merry Gunjou and say with half-opened eyes.

"..... you're really annoying and I'm thinking that it might be better to kill you."

But in truth, I feel relieved. The tightness in my chest leaves, and I can feel my heartbeat returning back to normal.

Feeling relieved and accomplished.

The **Holy Sword** switch has been completed.

I can save labyrinth diseased girls.

I can save my little sister.

"Are you going to keep your word?"

"No way."

"There aren't many chances to have me as an ally you know?"

"Oh my. I see. But I don't need you."

On hearing that, Gunjou's fist flies up. I grab it. Grasp it; comparing our strengths, she's weaker. On top of that, she's light. Just a mere 35kg.

I say.

"I won't keep letting you hit me."

"If you don't want to get hit, then hurry up and say it."

"You won't be able to hit me."

"Just be honest!"

"Before that, can you calm down?"

"Gaaaaaaaaaaawd, Shinnosuke!"

"What?"

"You saved me! I'm grateful for that! Thanks!"

With her fist still held in mid-air, her face turns red in embarrassment as she says that.

She's expressing her gratitude.

I look down at her in exasperation and say.

"Ah, that's cute."

"Hey."

Gunjou draws her hand back.

"It's embarrassing so don't say stuff like that all right!?"

Her face is still red.

With her red face, she glares at me and says.

"..... just once."

"Hn?"

"..... I shall let you use me just once. To repay my debt to you. So hurry up and tell me your objective."

On hearing that,

"All right."

I reply.

Gunjou then looks surprised and says.

"That's surprisingly quick....."

But, I interrupt her and say.

"I'm already fully aware of whether you and Shiro can be trusted or not. Thus, I understand that it'd be inefficient to not make use of you guys."

"..... hmm. And?"

Gunjou looks hard at me.

But still, I can feel a resistance in saying what I'm going to say. No person would be willing to follow me in this foolish pipe dream.

It's impossible to clear Apocalypse Alice.

Since it's rank 666.

Even for Gunjou who was rank 42, I've already ended up in such a state, how in the world are we supposed to raid a rank 666 labyrinth?

Besides, there's no real benefit in doing this. It's not like we would be able to get our hands on powerful military magic or save tons of lives or gain anything of that sort.

Even if we succeed, what we'll get back is just normal, ordinary girl with a cute smiling face.

In that case, there probably won't be any human being who would risk their lives and use their resources to aid me. If I were a military corporation, I would just make use of the fool who wants to save his litter sister as much as I can in raiding Apocalypse Alice, and dump him in the end.

No one will cooperate unless our interests are aligned.

If that's the case, then why am I about to tell about my own weakness? I really don't know. It's better to think it over. If I don't think about these feelings of mine right now more carefully, I probably won't be able to get a good grasp of the situation I am in.

But still,

"..... it's my little sister."

I ended up saying it.

In the end, I am probably just a helpless, lonely guy. Since I have always wanted someone to hear about my own weakness. I have come to realize that I was reaching limits of moving forward all by myself.

Thus,

"..... my little sister contracted the labyrinth disease. And, she's the worst case of all..... at rank 666."

Instantly, Gunjou's eyes widen in surprise.

That's a natural thing, I suppose.

Since I just blurted out the name of a labyrinth that's impossible to conquer.

It's a foolish child's words to seriously talk about raiding it to save his little sister.

"Eh, wait, is that true? Your little sister is Apocalypse Alice?"

"Yeah. Ah, I guess you are having second thoughts about repaying your debt?"

I say while smiling.

However.

Gunjou's reply is far beyond what I've expected.

"Ah, erhm erhm, wait, you gotta be kidding....."

She says, flustered. The turmoil on her is so strangely huge that I cock my head to the side.

"What's wrong?"

"Ah, erhm, Shinnosuke, remain calm and hear me out all right?"

"I mean, what's wrong? You should be the one to remain calm."

However, her fluster not dissipating, she continues.

"Right now..... erhm..... right now....."

"What is wrong?"

"Right now..... the labyrinth that I had brought forth, is for some reason, connected to the 《Apocalypse Alice》 labyrinth in Kichijouji. Those rabbits carrying pocket watches, which had been attacking us all this while without stopping, were monsters sent by your little sister."

On hearing those words ---

I can hear my heart start to race again.

Chapter 2 - Mitsutomo Group

Anyhow, I need to understand the situation.

I have to know the reason behind why this place is connected to Apocalypse Alice.

"What on earth do you mean by.....?"

I start but do not get the time to finish.

"Yaah yaah, yaah yaah."

I hear voices saying that. I look in their direction. Standing at the entrance that connects the corridor to this hall, is a rabbit.

It's probably a rabbit conjured by my little sister Saki.

A rabbit wearing a suit that has a heart mark finely woven into it.

Why haven't I noticed that? Despite the fact that it very much resembles the rabbit appearing in the illustrations of "Alice in Wonderland" that Saki and I used to read.

Despite the fact that Saki had appeared in my dream and talked to me.

Even though it's unbelievable, this place is connected to my little sister's labyrinth.

To the rank 666 labyrinth --- aka

Apocalypse Alice.

The rabbit takes out a pocket watch with its left hand.

It looks at the watch and says.

"Yaah yaah, human....."

I snap my fingers immediately. Activate my 《**Headphone Fuzz**》.

The sound from it shakes my brain.

The song shakes my brain matter.

The cursed song shakes my brain matter.

【*In an instant♪ In a flash♪ In the time of a flash♪*

The flash of time, the flash of an instant♪ In an instant♪ In a flash ———】

I look at the Gunjou beside me. Gunjou too has activated her 《**Headphone Fuzz**》. But her movements are much slower than when she protected me from the rabbits earlier.

I say.

"Gunjou, you weren't like this when you had the labyrinth disease you know?"

"That's a given, right!"

"What a useless girl."

"You're the useless....."

The rabbit attacks Gunjou.

Gunjou yells.

"Damn, my magic won't make it in time....."

"**Acceleration** switch!"

I activate my magic. A switch flips in my body.

My whole body accelerates.

In an instant, for just a second, my speed surpasses even that of god.

I kick the head of the rabbit. The rabbit doesn't even flinch, but stops moving. Its red eyes turn to me. By then, my brain has already been filled with a different curse.

【*Sliced, shredded light ♪*

Shredded, ripped-up light ♪
Abnormal, ruthless, extraordinary light ――――】

"**Demon Sword** switch ---"

I take out a knife from my pocket. From the center of the knife, a sword with the color of darkness starts extending. This magic will confer its magic to any object touched, and transform it into a demon sword.

And right now, the demon sword special properties conferred onto this knife activate.

The special properties conferred onto this knife number two.

A long blade like that of a normal sword.

And an assassination property that can find the place where a fatal blow can be dealt to the opponent with the strength of this sword.

I search for the weakness of the rabbit.

A red target point appears in my field of vision and that point is targeted at the pocket watch of the rabbit.

"So that's the weak point duh!"

I swing my sword. Splitting the pocket watch apart. The rabbit makes a shocked face. Following that, the rabbit disappears.

Just like before, another rabbit was hiding behind;

"**Sea Moon Wheel** switch!"

Gunjou conjures magical wheels and attempts to slash its torso apart --- but, it doesn't have enough power.

The rabbit's torso can't be cut.

While she had the labyrinth disease, she could dispose of a rabbit with one blow, and right now, the power of her magic is clearly weaker when she employs it as a human.

"Wha."

Gunjou looks surprised.

But she immediately thrusts both her hands forward,

"Gooooooooooooooooooo!"

Five jellyfish wheels that appear strike the rabbit at the same place as before. On the fourth hit, the rabbit's body got cut apart and it disappears.

The fifth wheel slices the air.

But with that, the rabbits have been dealt with.

Haah haah, Gunjou pants, her shoulders heaving.

I look down at her, make a small sigh and say.

"Weren't you better when you were in labyrinth diseased state?"

"Shut up!"

"By the way, the pocket watch is their weak point."

"Eh, is that so? But it's hard to aim at such a small object with long range offensive magic....."

"As I thought, you're useless."

"I'll send you flying."

"Didn't you load a slot with direct point offense magic?"

Gunjou then looks up at me, then twirls her finger, selecting a song loaded in her 《**Headphone Fuzz**》. She then says.

"I have one loaded, but its performance is not too good. That's why I don't really want to get too close. Besides, I can handle most enemies with **Sea Moon Wheel**."

But that's probably a lie.

She's a daughter of one of the three biggest military conglomerates, Mitsutomo Group, at least on paper. There's no way a half-ass magic is loaded in the 《**Headphone Fuzz**》 of a daughter of that kind of family.

I thus say.

"It must be because you didn't practice it much and suck at it."

"Uwu....."

"Your weakness as a labyrinth-diseased girl is blood. Could it be that you hate getting close because you are weak against blood?"

"Ah-uwuu....."

Seems like it's a bullseye.

Well of course, since magic is difficult to wield, it's hard to be proficient in all of the magic in the six different slots equally. Besides, it's not really efficient to become equally proficient in all of them.

Research has shown that one's performance would be much higher if he focuses on practicing on the one thing that he's really good at.

And for me, my forte is close combat.

I'm good at cutting down enemies with both **Acceleration** switch and **Demon Sword** switch activated simultaneously.

It's the opposite for Gunjou.

Staying at a medium-long range distance, she'd have her underlings protect her while she survey the enemy and probe for their weak points and slash at them with her jellyfish wheels; that's what she's good at, I suppose. The fighting style of a rich man's daughter. The fighting style of someone with underlings.

But well, that doesn't matter for now. What I want to ask about, is information concerning my little sister.

I look around and say.

"Can I ask you something?"

Gunjou replies before I even ask.

"The rabbits come at intervals of 3 to 5 minutes. So we can't really stay here for long."

"I see."

Then, does that mean that for the past one month while she was down with the labyrinth disease, she had been protecting me without sleeping, from those rabbits that spawn within a short interval of 3 to 5 minutes?

I consider that. But I do not ask her any further, If I ask, and that's really the case, I feel like I'm going to spend my entire life repaying this debt.

Gunjou continues.

"So if we want to talk more, we have to move to another room."

"Well, this labyrinth was conjured by you, you should have the map....."

She then nods.

"The map of my surroundings is inside my head. Once we exit the door behind us, and enter the hidden door down the corridor, the rabbits probably won't be able to find us."

I look at Gunjou and say.

"Oh, for once, you're of use."

She then makes a proud face and says,

"Fuh, who do you think I am?"

"Minus vomit cup girl."

"It's always the same words..... your teasing is like that of an elementary school kid huh."

"That so? I'm the type who likes to make fun of a girl I like."

"Eh.....!?"

Gunjou's face turns slightly red, and she scowls at me.

"Ah, I'm kidding so please don't make such a reaction, will you?"

"When did I!? I didn't react or anything!"

"Haah....."

"What's that sigh for!"

While bantering, we exit the hall. As Gunjou kicks a place on what appears to be a wall, the wall turns. Beyond that, is a small room that's about 4 tatami mats in size.

I look intently at the room and murmur.

"If we get attacked by the rabbits in such a small room, we'll be at their mercy."

"It'd be fine. Those rabbits won't come."

Gunjou enters.

I also enter.

On doing that, the wall turns around shut by itself.

I ask.

"How did you know they won't come?"

"Because the rabbits will only react to enemies that they can see. And also because, not one of them have noticed the hidden door that I created."

Those are probably memories she got from when she was still labyrinth diseased. This labyrinth belongs to her. That's why she remembers about the things that happened in this labyrinth.

Just now she said 'surroundings' --- which means she doesn't have a complete grasp of everything that happened in the labyrinth, but,

"Anyway, this is a safety zone huh."

During eternal labyrinth raids, it's an established tactic to find a safety zone, camp there, embed a coordinate designation magic, and repeatedly invade and escape to slowly clear it.

I lean my back against the corner of the room, and sink down onto the floor.

Gunjou looks down at me.

"..... are you tired?"

"..... yeah. A little. I wonder why. In spite of sleeping for a month."

No, if I have really been sleeping for a month, I won't be able to move like this normally. Thus, there must be a special reason as to why I had remained unconscious all this while.

Could it be due to the effect of the magic from the sword that Kiri had impaled into me?

That's not all to what I don't know.

- Where are Shiro, Himi and Yousuke?
- Where's Kiri?
- Where is the Valor Team that had interfered with me when I tried to save Gunjou and caused her to turn into an eternal labyrinth?

And, more importantly, why is this labyrinth connected to 《Apocalypse Alice》 right now?

I want to ask those questions.

Even as I turn a number of hypotheses and suppositions in my mind, trying to make sense of them, I can't figure it out. There's too little information for me to go on.

Thus, I look at Gunjou.

She then starts talking immediately.

"..... I also don't know the details though."

"Yeah."

"Erhm, where should I start....."

"From the beginning. Everything from the beginning."

"From the beginning..... you say, is it okay for me to start from when you got stabbed by that Japanese sword girl?"

On hearing her question, I recall.

As to when I actually lost consciousness.

The last thing I saw was the leader of the Valor Team, the girl called Mitsutomo Kujaku, stabbing Gunjou with a knife. But that knife couldn't kill Gunjou. And then the time limit was up. Gunjou then started turning into an eternal labyrinth ---

That was when I lost consciousness.

However, there is something off about what I'm seeing right now.

Because Kujaku clearly killed Gunjou back then.

At that time, blood which was Gunjou's weakness had been splashed all around her, and on top of that, she had her whole body restrained by the members of the Valor Team.

In that case, it'd be an easy thing to just separate her head from her body or gouge out her intestines. And also, Gunjou was an existence that had to be killed. Since, if she turned into an eternal labyrinth, the streets and people swallowed up by her could no longer be saved.

And even for us, the instant we get swallowed up by an eternal labyrinth, we would become part of the labyrinth.

But Kujaku did not panic in the slightest.

She merely stabbed a small knife into Gunjou's chest.

And then, Gunjou ended up turning into an eternal labyrinth.

Girl killing failed.

But, that was obviously done on purpose.

"....."

I rewind my memories further back. Searching for the very beginning of what I should recall about this incident.

The leader of the Valor Team called herself

A daughter of the military conglomerate 『Mitsutomo Group』.

And she did refer to Gunjou, who should also be a lady of Mitsutomo Group, as 'one of us'.

--- we'll dispose of our own shame ourselves.

Kujaku did said something along that line.

Our own.

As in a fellow daughter of Mitsutomo Group.

But, in the class we attended, in the profile of the labyrinth diseased girl 《Mizuiro Gunjou》, the following information, which Gunjou herself is unaware of, was written.

Gunjou is actually an abandoned kid ---

She was an orphan bought by Mitsutomo Group from a children's home ---

Her parents are not even married, and merely serve as her trainers ---

Mitsutomo Group hid all that from her and made use of her; and without knowing all that, she desperately worked hard, hoping for her parents' recognition ---

I don't really consider that as the worst kind of situations. In the world of military organizations, labyrinths and magic, you'd often hear these kind of stories.

But, if this is indeed true, then to Kujaku, Gunjou is no kin.

She's merely a lab rat.

And if this lab rat had ended up turning into a labyrinth and if she was here to dispose of this failing, then she would definitely need to kill her.

But Kujaku did not do that.

In a laid-back fashion, while smiling, she stabbed Gunjou's chest with a small knife which no one would think capable of dealing a fatal blow to a labyrinth diseased girl.

"....."

I recall that knife.

The knife that Kujaku had.

What on earth was that?

A knife that wasn't used to behead her, nor to gouge out her gut, but merely used to stab into her chest.

But was that really a knife?

Could it be an article for implanting magic?

Could it be that, what Kujaku used, was a type of magic much like my **Holy Sword** switch, which could be used to meddle with a labyrinth diseased girl?

I look around my surroundings. In spite of severing Gunjou away, her labyrinth remains.

And about the fact that right now, another eternal labyrinth nearby, 《Apocalypse Alice》, is connected to Gunjou's labyrinth.

Could it be that that's the true motive behind Kujaku's knife?

Then,

"..... the true motive of Mitsutomo Group is the 《Apocalypse Alice》?"

That's bad. While I'm wasting my time around here, there's a possibility that the Mitsutomo Group finding a way to making military use of my little sister Saki.

I look at Gunjou and say.

"Hey Gunjou, can I ask you something?"

"What is it?"

"Do you know Kujaku?"

On hearing that, Gunjou's eyes go wide and she cocks her head to the side.

"What kind of question is that? Of course I know..... you're talking about the bird peacock[2] right?"

Seems like Gunjou doesn't know about Mitsutomo Kujaku.

But that's to be expected.

There's no researcher who would tell a lab rat that she's a lab rat.

And I do not know whether or not I should tell her about her parentage right now. We are inside a labyrinth. It's not a good thing to learn the truth about one's parentage out of nowhere and waver because of that inside the labyrinth, I suppose.

Even if I have to tell her, it'd be outside the labyrinth. And it should be at a fun place. The truth about her parents not being her real parents is not something that she should dwell on, so I think it's best to tell her when she's singing herself silly at a karaoke box. Maybe it's better to have Shiro, Yousuke and Himi along with us then.

Thus, I ask another question.

"What happened to Shiro and the rest?"

On hearing that, Gunjou's eyes narrow slightly.

On seeing that, my pulse quickens for an instant again.

There's a possibility that Shiro and the rest had died, perhaps.

If that happened, I'd probably be hurt again.

Easily hurt.

Because I'm weak. Terribly weak. That was why I didn't want to get close to anyone.

"Sorry. We are digressing. Start from the beginning. From the time when I lost consciousness."

I finally recover from my confusion, sort out my thoughts, and prepare to listen to the story.

The information that I've sorted out in my mind are as follows:

- Gunjou was made used by the Mitsutomo Group.
- But she doesn't know it herself.

- There's a possibility that the knife that Kujaku used had a similar power to the **Holy Sword** switch, and by making use of Gunjou's labyrinth, Mitsutomo Group may be attempting to raid 《Apocalypse Alice》.

- But 『Metropolitan Kichijouji High』 probably has no connection with the Mitsutomo Group. If there was a connection, then Gunjou's parentage would probably not have been revealed to us. Thus, this is an experiment conducted independently by Mitsutomo Group. They should have wanted to perform their experiment without any interference. And it should have gone their way. Since there shouldn't have been anyone remaining who would challenge a time-limited rank 42 labyrinth.

- But something unexpected happened.

- Firstly, the top student Gunjou should have a disease onset occurring while she was in the chopper. And at that stage, the school's elite team should have been swallowed up by the labyrinth and disappear. In that scenario, there definitely wouldn't be anyone remaining who would challenge the resulting labyrinth. But, thanks to Gunjou riding in the chopper that was carrying the wounded, the entire Hero Team survived.

- That very Hero Team reached where Gunjou was. And ended up witnessing the experiment.

- Then, they should dispose the Hero Team. And there also wouldn't be any evidence left since they were inside the labyrinth.

- If this was an independent act of Mitsutomo Group, then, the act of causing a labyrinth disease onset in Tokyo area, could only amount to an act of terror. Before this got out, it was necessary to kill all witnesses.

- In other words, the chance of Shiro and the rest getting killed by the Valor Team is high.

After sorting out all those thoughts, I ask.

"..... so, what's the story?"

On hearing that, Gunjou starts recounting what happened since I lost consciousness.

Chapter 3 - Shiro's Resolve

Going back in time a little.

Damn, I've let my guard down ---

Thought Hishiro Shiro as he lay fallen on the ground, with a sword pierced through his back.

Looking behind him, both Yousuke and Himi too had swords impaled into them. He could not move his body at all. It seemed like this was due to the magic embedded into the sword.

A magic used for restraining others.

"Kiri, you bitch....."

By the time Shiro had uttered that, she was already onto her next prey. With beautiful long hair fluttering in the air, her body advanced lightly. A new Japanese sword was magically conjured into her right hand. She readied it.

Her prey was a fool who was desperately trying to save his comrade. The fool's back was completely defenseless. He was totally unaware of Kiri behind him.

Shiro attempted to shout "Shinnosuke!" to that fool, but it was already too late. Kiri's sword stabbed into the back of Shinnosuke.

Shinnosuke did not react at all. It seemed like he never would have imagined that his comrade..... Kiri, would attack him from behind.

And with that, it ended.

They lost.

Kiri was a traitor.

Gunjou could not be saved.

Then, what should he do?

What was the correct thing that he should do?

How could he protect his comrades?

The only obvious choice was to **Escape** but, he couldn't move his finger. He couldn't select his magic song slots. He could move his head and mouth, but can't move anything below his neck.

Thus, right now, the only cursed song that was playing in his head was the **Thousand Deities Flash Of Light** switch.

【*Open the foolish sky ♪*

Open the foolish land ♪
The foolish us open Nirvana ♪】

Shiro looked at Himi and Yousuke once again. He tried to query them with his eyes, but it was futile. But since he couldn't move his fingers, he couldn't **Escape**.

Then how could they get out?

"..... be on standby."

He mouthed the order with only his lips. Himi and Yousuke's eyes responded to that.

Shiro turned to face his front. And pondered.

He probably could **Escape**. Since he had the cursed song, **Thousand Deities Flash Of Light** switch, playing.

Additionally, he could freely bring out **Thousand Deities Flash Of Light** from anywhere that his hands could reach. If he invoked the boring-like magic with the drill-like tip of **Thousand Deities Flash Of Light** switch into the sword that was impaled into his chest, he could probably wrench the sword out.

Of course, that carried some risk. For **Thousand Deities Flash Of Light** switch carried too much power and was a comparatively bland magic, he might fail to properly bore into the sword and end up shaving off part of his body instead. If that happened, he probably would have less than half of his body left.

Besides, once he invoked that magic, he would leave himself a big opening. When that happened, the Valor Team probably wouldn't just sit around and watch.

Therefore, he only had one chance.

To pull out the sword with **Thousand Deities Flash Of Light** switch.

And save his comrades.

But which of his comrades should he save?

Gunjou? Or Shinnosuke?

Or, save Himi and Yousuke, regroup, then proceed to save Shinnosuke and Gunjou with them?

Which one would it be? Which one had a better chance of succeeding?

At any rate, he only had one chance.

Just one.

While Shiro was seeking for that one chance, this was what Shinnosuke and Kiri said to each other.

"..... Kiri....., pull out your sword."

"No way."

"No, you'll pull it out. I believe in you....."

"Ah-haha. You can't do that. You can't trust someone like me."

"No way. I trust you."

"You can't."

"I trust you."

"I said you can't."

"Shut up! Didn't you talk about being comrades earlier! Therefore, you are our comrade!"

Bellowed Shinnosuke.

Comrade.

That twisted Arisu Shinnosuke with a shitty personality hollered 'comrade'.

"..... hey hey, are you for real?"

Shiro smiled slightly. And his belief in Shinnosuke grew stronger.

It seemed like Shinnosuke had yet to give up on saving Gunjou. In that case, he couldn't just bail out like that.

It was decided. He would pull out Kiri's sword and run towards Shinnosuke. And he would leave everything to that rarely worked-up, desperate fool. If he was that serious, he might be able to succeed in saving Gunjou.

Thus,

"..... **Thousand Deities**....."

However, Shiro's words stopped halfway.

Because the situation suddenly changed.

Kiri's back quivered. He could hear her voice that was hoarse with tears.

"..... I, I really..... I thought I saw a dream in which I could really become your comrade....."

It seemed like she was crying.

"Kiri! Forget that and just pull out the sword!"

"I can't. I..... I....."

It seemed like Kiri was crying.

"I don't know what kind of a hold they have on you but, but I, we'll protect you so please, pull out your sword!"

Shinnosuke yelled. His fervent voice seemed like it could move things.

But the world would not forgive that.

Because Kiri was someone who lived in the darkness. It was not an uncommon story. Humans kept by military corporations and dictatorial countries; they weren't really uncommon.

And, she was probably someone who was working for the Valor Team.

A traitor.

But, it wasn't really an uncommon story. It was really not uncommon to hear about someone stabbing her comrades in the back without batting an eyelid.

Since, in the world of labyrinths where the rewards that could be reaped were great, those who became strong were all like that. Born in that darkness, raised in that darkness, but yet, they searched for a light somewhere.

Kiri had probably already given up on searching for that light. That was the kind of face she had. That was the kind of girl, with a plastered smile on her face, she was.

Everything was an act; a fake beauty.

The world was dark.

Miracles did not happen in this world.

"Most of the time, that is."

Murmured Shiro.

But right now, a miracle was about to happen.

Because Kiri had ended up crying.

Thrown off by Shinnosuke's passion, Kiri's heart eventually moved.

After that Shinnosuke with a horrible personality hollered loudly about her being a comrade, Kiri's heart eventually moved.

There are times when the world changes. Even though it is an occasional thing, miracles do occur when someone hollers.

Of course, right now, it had yet to happen. But, probably, it was not Shiro who was creating the miracle here. Shiro stopped his invocation of**Thousand Deities Flash Of Light** switch for now.

Kiri's tears continued to flow, but she did not pull her sword out.

"..... I'm sorry, Shinnosuke-kun."

"Don't screw with me!"

"Sorry..... sorry."

Kiri continued to apologize in a quavering voice.

Shiro looked intently at both Kiri and Shinnosuke. Staring at them with his red eyes.

Then, he started analyzing the situation calmly.

It was enough for just one person to holler up a miracle passionately. Right now, Shinnosuke was doing that.

In that case, Shiro would gather in all the information calmly. This was teamwork. Since they only came to raid this labyrinth based on an agreement to trust one another. In that case, he would believe in them to the end, and it would be fine as long as they win in the end.

"....."

Kiri was crying.

But this was not a place where she should be crying. If she cried, she would not be able to fulfill her role as a traitor. In other words, there was a possibility that she was not a traitor.

Shiro looked at the sword pierced into his chest.

The sword was impaled into his heart.

But yet, he did not die.

Kiri should possess several magics that could blast a human being into oblivion in just an instant. Reason being, the magic she had used was at a level that was able to deal with the monsters inside a high ranking labyrinth diseased girl.

Then, why did they not die?

The effect of Kiri's magic was for some reason of a restraining type. In order to make Shiro unable to move. But yet, his head and mouth could move. So that he could see what was happening. So that he could speak. Perhaps, this was actually a magic used for interrogation. While allowing the target's head and mouth to move, one could inflict wounds on the target before his very eyes, and interrogate him.

But why did Kiri choose such a magic?

If she did not want Shiro to interfere, then it would be better to just quickly kill him off.

"Why."

Murmured Shiro.

"Why on earth."

Shiro glared at Shinnosuke and Kiri.

"What kind of visual message am I supposed to see here? Is there a hint to where the miracle will occur?"

At that moment, the leader of the Valor Team, by the name Kujaku, raised her knife.

"Stop!"

Shinnosuke hollered.

"Stop please! I..... I have a magic that can save Gunjou....."

But nobody waited for him.

Kujaku swung her knife down at Gunjou's chest.

"....."

Shiro grimaced.

If Kiri was a traitor, an enemy, and only had intention of doing harm on them, then if he were to survive, he would probably later blame himself, who had been unable to move at this place.

But, Shiro chose to believe Kiri. He chose to believe the feelings of Kiri who responded to Shinnosuke's cries with tears.

Kujaku's knife pierced into Gunjou's chest.

Gunjou, for some reason, did not die. But, a *gah-hah* escaped from her and she coughed out blood.

At that moment, the time limit displayed in the 《**Headphone Fuzz**》 became 0.

But the Valor Team did not panic.

Kiri too did not panic.

It seemed like the time limit going to 0 was within their expectations.

"Ah, ah, ah, ah."

Gunjou started crying out.

《Ah, ah, ah, ah, ah, ah, aaaaah, ah, aaaah,
aaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaahhhh》

She turned into an eternal labyrinth.

Once she got swallowed up by it, it would be the end.

They would no longer be able to save Gunjou.

They should **Escape**. Lying here and believing in the tears of Kiri and the passion of Shinnosuke was never a sane thing.

However,

"....."

Shiro still did not use his magic. He searched for a chance. He believed in his comrades. At such a juncture, there was nothing else but to believe in his comrades.

Gunjou hollered for a while, then went limp. It seemed that signaled to end of the eternal labyrinth transformation.

Kujaku then said,

"All right, this should be fine. If the magic has succeeded, then this labyrinth is now connected to the《Apocalypse Alice》."

She then pulled out the knife from Gunjou's chest. The knife disappeared. It seemed like that knife was a product born out of magic.

"..... Apocalypse Alice."

Murmured Shiro.

In other words, that was their --- no, that was the military conglomerate Mitsutomo Group's objective. Gunjou was just a throwaway pawn. This was a plan to use Gunjou to connect to 《Apocalypse Alice》.

Gunjou could no longer move. After ascertaining that, Kujaku looked in the direction of Kiri, and said.

"But well, your acting earlier was pretty amazing, Kiri. Is there any point to shedding those tears?"

Kiri looked at Kujaku and answered.

"Nothing ~. It's because I'm the type that gets into the role."

"The role of --- a comrade of the Hero Team?"

Kiri wiped off tears, and a dark smile then surfaced on her,

"Yeah. The peeps of the Hero Team are all really passionate. Things like comrades, friendship..... they're really stupid. But since I'm a good person, when I betray my comrades, for some reason, my chest hurts a little you see ~. Here."

She said while pressing on her large chest.

Kujaku looked hard at her in disgust and said,

"..... to kill your comrades so indifferently as you're shedding your tears, you are a pretty horrible person."

That confirmed it.

Kiri did not betray them.

Kujaku thought that Shinnosuke, Shiro, Yousuke, Himi were all dead. Of course. Kiri could kill them. She possessed the magic to do that.

But they did not die. They were merely restrained.

Then, what Kiri was doing right now ---

"Jeez, Shinnosuke-kun was just too worked-up. At the very last part, I could barely contain my laughter for crying out loud. What the hell's with『We'll protect you』, gawd..... the brat doesn't even know a thing ~"

What Kiri was doing right now, was an act to protect her comrades from the Mitsutomo Group.

Half smiling, Kiri kicked the fallen body of Shinnosuke on the ground. Shinnosuke remained limp. If he was not dead, then he was restrained by a magic that affected even the head, different from them.

His body appeared lifeless.

Kujaku then looked at Kiri with somewhat disgusted eyes and said.

"I just can't bear looking at that..... you're really horrible. It's good that you aren't our comrade. You'll just betray us without batting an eyelid."

Kiri looked up and smiled.

"Are you being cynical?"

"No, I was praising you."

"Oh really. Well, you should get going right? You don't have time to tarry around here right? You have to quickly go get the rights to Apocalypse Alice."

But Kujaku looked hard at Kiri and said.

"No no, we can't have that. According to the agreement with the Kowloon Devils Group, we can use your life freely up till the very end."

"....."

Kowloon Devils Group --- that was what Kujaku said.

It was the name of a huge mafia group that had bases in both China and Hong Kong.

It seemed like Kiri was a member of the Kowloon Devils Group.

An assassin raised by a mafia.

Or someone who had her family held hostage by the mafia.

He did not know the details of her situation.

But whichever way it was, right now, she had also betrayed that mafia. If this got out, she would probably get punished.

Calling them fools and abandoning them, for the sake of protecting these meaningless comrades, right now, she was risking her life.

Why did she go as far as to risk her life? He did not know. He did not know what she was feeling neither her situations. But, he knew that she could be trusted. And also, her life was already just short of getting snuffed out.

Their enemies were the Mitsutomo Group and a gigantic mafia.

Kujaku said.

"Now Kiri, please be our vanguard. Even though we were told that the difficulty level of the 《Apocalypse Alice》 would be lowered after getting connected to Gunjou's labyrinth..... it's hard to swallow that. A rank 666 sure is scary. So it's better to have a thick wall of flesh. With your pointlessly large breasts, it's the perfect role for you, right?"

Kiri then looked hard at Kujaku and said.

"Ah-ha, sounds like it's real cynicism this time, isn't it? From someone with no breasts."

Kujaku replied.

"For a person like me who doesn't need to deceive others, I don't need them to be so big..... and I don't feel the need to be cynical."

"Uwah, that stings. Is that the kind of thing to say to a friend who is hurting and crying from betraying her comrades?"

"..... who's your friend? Please don't get too close to me. I can't trust the mafia. If you get too close, I'll kill you."

"....."

With that, Kujaku gathered her subordinates.

The guys from Kansai's Valor Team. The other subordinates should be from the five transport choppers. If everyone had survived and arrived here, there were probably a hundred people there.

And they probably were all people gathered by Mitsutomo Group for the purpose of raiding 《Apocalypse Alice》. Carrying large amounts of water and food with them. Right from the beginning, they were here for raiding an eternal labyrinth.

After talking for a while, Kujaku looked up and said.

"My, you're still here? Kiryuu Kiri. You should get going and stand in the front line."

"..... huh? Am I going to stand right at the front by myself with no team?"

Kujaku smiled.

"Rest assured. As your comrades, we'll watch your back. Ah, but, since you just stabbed your Hero Team comrades from behind, you can't trust us right?"

"..... hey."

"Just kidding. We'll protect you to some extent. Since we have a contract with the Kowloon Devils. So, can you stop making that hurt expression for every little thing?"

Kiri then said.

"I'm an actress, right?"

"Whatever. I have no interest in you. At any rate, our relationship with you, with the Kowloon Devils Group, will end after this labyrinth raid. Now, hurry up. We'll retrieve the magic from 《Apocalypse Alice》 before the Japanese government and Taikou Pharmaceuticals notice this."

She then raised her hand. Upon doing that, each of the Kansai Valor Team members started to form up at that lead. Kujaku retreated to the back.

Different from Gunjou, the true lady of Mitsutomo Group retreated to the safest place behind that wall of flesh and then said.

"But then again, it's because you are strong that I'm having you right up at the front line though."

Kiri then turned around,

"I'm left with no choice huh ~"

While saying that, she turned towards Shiro.

And met his eyes for an instant.

Kiri was making a sad face. She did not send any kind of message to him.

At that moment, from the Valor Team group, a girl with an abnormally short skirt and twin tails jumped out. She was the one who used flame magic if he remembered correctly.

Her name should be Makoto.

Makoto said.

"Something that looks like a rabbit has come!"

He could not turn to take a look. There was a need to let them think that they were dead.

What had appeared was probably a monster conjured by the labyrinth. There were not any rabbit-like creatures among the monsters conjured by Gunjou.

Then, based on the conversation between Kujaku and Kiri, there was a possibility that the monster was from the Apocalypse Alice.

And if it was a monster from a rank 666 labyrinth, then, the people here would probably be killed in an instant.

The humans right now could not even last three minutes inside a rank 100 labyrinth.

But Apocalypse Alice was rank 666.

They could not survive in it for a second.

But yet, Makoto jumped out.

A small guy from the Valor Team by the name of Zakkii if he remembered correctly also jumped out.

Kiri also jumped out.

He heard the noises of a battle.

He heard the noises of magic getting invoked.

And finally, he heard the voice of Makoto.

"Wooooaaooorhhh, we did it! Kujaku-sama, Apocalypse Alice is probably already weakened!"

Kujaku said.

"Then, let's begin. We shall now commence the raid on the world's most difficult labyrinth, Apocalypse Alice. If we succeed, then the world will be ours. Are you all ready?"

""Yes!""

"Then, let's go!"

And the Kansai team started advancing.

Everyone had a nervous look.

That was natural given that they were about to raid Apocalypse Alice.

Gunjou did not move.

Shinnosuke did not move.

No one looked in the direction of Shiro, Himi, and Yousuke.

They all had Apocalypse Alice on their hands right now.

The Valor Team disappeared from the room.

But still, Shiro did not move for a while.

Screams could be heard far away.

The sounds of battle.

The sounds of battle faded away. The screams also faded away.

But he did not move.

He did not move.

Without moving, in an unsightly manner, he reduced his breathing until it was quiet, and then,

"**Thousand Deities Flash of Light** switch!"

He raised his voice.

Instantly, his magic activated.

Behind him a spear with gigantic drill-like tip appeared. The drill entwined itself with Kiri's sword. And pulled it out.

"Guh."

While he felt a strange sense of discomfort when the sword was pulled out, there was no pain. As expected, the magic was not the type that would wound an opponent.

The sword got blasted away, and fell onto the floor.

The magic was undone.

His body could move again.

He stood up.

Shiro pressed his hand against his chest and breathed in deeply,

"Fuuuuhh....."

After breathing out once, he looked around him.

The floor was completely red from the blood scattered by the Kansai people. Lying in that sea of blood, Yousuke and Himi were pinned down with swords.

He had to save them.

Shiro approached them, and pulled out the swords. The pulled out swords disappeared. The sword he had pulled out from himself had also disappeared from the floor. Since its role had ended.

Yousuke stood up immediately,

"Damn! We lost to the Kansai guys!"

He said in a slightly angry voice. Contrary to his bespectacled look, he was surprisingly sore at losing.

Indeed, they had lost. They had insufficient intel and too small a force.

But that could not be helped. Since they had to remain covert in this school.

Himi then stood up and said.

"..... we were saved by Kiri-san, right....."

Shiro nodded. He then looked at the two of them and said.

"Both of you heard what they said? This is a combined undertaking of the military conglomerate Mitsutomo Group and the Kowloon Devils Group."

"Yeah. This is bad."

Shiro nodded.

"Really bad."

This was something they should report to their organization as soon as possible. This was a big incident that might just change the balance of the military powers in the world.

But, well,

"We'll talk about that later. Let's save our comrade first."

Shiro turned around.

He looked at the Shinnosuke who had lost consciousness from getting stabbed by the sword, and the standing, unmoving Gunjou beside him.

If he pulled out the sword, Shinnosuke should be able to move.

Once he did that, then there was a possibility that Shinnosuke might be able to save Gunjou with his magic.

In other words, their original objective of 『saving Gunjou』 might be fulfilled.

"It's Kiri's complete win huh....."

Shiro muttered, to which Himi said from behind him.

"But, Kiri-san is really in a bad position."

"Hm. Then, shall we go save Kiri next? I'm already kind of tired."

Shiro said with a wry smile. With that, he continued walking towards Shinnosuke.

Yousuke said while following behind.

"But there are still things about Kiri that I do not trust."

"Like what?"

"Why did she not restrain our brains and heads like what she did to Shinnosuke? If she wanted to protect us, it would be safer to just make us look completely dead. But yet, why did she show us everything? Does that mean....."

Shiro turned around and said to Yousuke.

"To show herself to us as a tragic heroine, so as to make use of us?"

"It's a possibility, right?"

Of course it was possible.

Anything was possible in this world.

But Himi said from the side.

"But Kiri-san cried, right?"

Yousuke said.

"You're really a naive one. A woman can easily shed tears just to draw attention to herself, isn't it ~"

"I don't!"

Himi said slightly angrily, but well, he did not know much about those things. However, at the very least,

"..... those tears looked genuine to me."

Said Shiro.

He could tell that those tears were real and were triggered by the heartfelt words from Shinnosuke.

Yousuke then said.

"..... yeah. I could see that too. But someone had to play the devil's advocate."

He was right about that too.

"Well then, I'll leave that part to you."

After making the request to Yousuke, Shinnosuke looked intently at Gunjou before getting closer to Shinnosuke.

He looked at the Mizuiro Gunjou who had become an eternal labyrinth.

Gunjou did not move.

She did not attack him.

Looking intently at that Gunjou, Shiro said.

"Hey Gunjou."

"....."

"Shrimp."

"....."

"Flat-chest."

"....."

"All right, there's no danger."

Shiro then approached Shinnosuke.

Gunjou still did not move. Maybe she was restrained by the knife that Kujaku used to stab her.

He moved to right next to the fallen Shinnosuke.

He grabbed the sword pierced into his back and pulled it out.

The magic should have been undone right then.

"All right, get up Shinnosuke. Let's save Gunjou."

"....."

But, Shinnosuke still did not move. His consciousness did not return. He did not even flinch.

"Ah? Hey, Shinnosuke.....?"

He called him but he did not move.

He shook his shoulder. But he did not open his eyes.

"Hey."

He slapped his cheeks. But he did not open his eyes.

"Hey, stop playing! Wake up Shinnosuke."

He grabbed his hair and twisted them,

"Hey you, stop joking around. I'm telling you to get up."

But, Shinnosuke still did not open his eyes. It was not like he died. He was still breathing. He had a pulse as well. However, his consciousness did not return.

Shiro turned to his comrades behind, and said.

"Hey, this guy isn't waking up."

Himi came over anxiously and said.

"I-I'll try using my healing magic!"

And she started invoking her magic.

Shiro stood up.

Yousuke then said.

"Can I said something that's dreadful and rational?"

Shiro knew what Yousuke was going to say but he still nodded.

"Say it."

"This is one thing that adds on to the possibility of Kiri making use of us."

Shiro scowled.

He was right.

If the reason as to why Shinnosuke would not wake up was attributed to Kiri's magic (and it would be 99% because of that), then they would have to go after her. Since they could not save Gunjou if Shinnosuke did not wake up. Only Shinnosuke had the magic to save Gunjou.

In other words, if they were to **Escape** here, then they would have gone back empty-handed, abandoned their comrades and escaped.

"And the Mitsutomo and Kowloon Devils will get their hands on Apocalypse Alice too....."

Yousuke then said.

"But there's also an advantage on our side. The Kansai guys think that we are dead."

"That's part of Kiri's plan right?"

"But if we are actually Kiri's comrade, it's to our advantage, right? We would be able to raid Apocalypse Alice to our benefit."

Shiro looked at Yousuke on hearing that.

He then considered.

He pondered about their current situation.

When Yousuke was talking about the advantages and disadvantages, he was not referring to the labyrinth raid.

He was referring to the people ---

Indeed, when it came down to killing people, they probably had the advantage this time.

But he did not have too much time to think.

Since there was a voice coming from the entrance to the hall.

"Yaah yaah. yaah yaah."

He looked in that direction.

There, stood a rabbit. A rabbit holding a pocket watch.

That rabbit said.

"Yaah yaah Mr. Human, it's time to die....."

"Everyone, be prepared for battle!"

Shiro hollered, and then ---

The raid on 《Apocalypse Alice》 started.

Chapter 4 - Wonderland

Gunjou's story ended.

The story that took place after I lost consciousness.

A story about what happened to Kiri, Shiro, Yousuke and Himi.

Her story was well organized, crisp, and easy to understand.

After that, Shiro and the rest fought the rabbit and won. During then, he saw Gunjou protecting Shinnosuke and decided to just go on ahead leaving them there. Since it was dangerous to bring the immobile Shinnosuke along as they advanced in the labyrinth.

Thus, after Shiro told the unresponsive Gunjou that they would find Kiri and ask her to undo her magic on Shinnosuke, they disappeared into the inner parts of the labyrinth.

As I listen until here, I ask.

"All that happened a month ago?"

"..... yeah."

Gunjou nods.

"But no one returned."

"Yeah."

"Then everyone has already died?"

But on hearing that, Gunjou points to my left arm. To the armband where 『Class 5』 is written.

☆ marks are present on it.

There are five ☆ marks.

The same number as those who infiltrated the labyrinth.

It is showing that Shinnosuke, Shiro, Himi, Yousuke and Kiri are alive and active in the labyrinth.

Somehow, everyone is alive.

On looking at it, I can feel a sense of relief from the depths of my heart.

"Aah, I see. I have this. I have never had comrades so I forgot about it."

I then look at Gunjou and say.

"Ah, but there is no ☆ representing you, which means you aren't a comrade."

She ignores me.

Gunjou says.

"So what're you going to do?"

I answer.

"There is only **Escape**, right? Only a fool will risk his life for the sake of others."

Gunjou then says.

"You are that fool."

"The one who calls others a fool is the fool ~"

"You risk your life for your little sister."

"My little sister is not 'others'."

"Y-You risk your life..... to save me....."

"I just wanted to sleep with you. It's just sexual desire. Hurry up and let me do you."

On hearing that, Gunjou glares at me sharply and with her face beet red for some reason, she says.

"..... if that's what you desire, you can do as you like. Since you're my life savior, if that's what you really want....."

I feel exasperated. Why do I always spout such meaningless, rotten words so lightly?

"I take that back. I have no interest in breastless shrimps."

However, ignoring me, while still glaring at me, Gunjou continues.

"But what you want is not me. It's your little sister, right?"

"....."

"You want to save your little sister, right? If that's the case, then I'll risk my life just once for that purpose."

On hearing that, my face turns to one of bewilderment.

"Why're you willing to go that far?"

"Because you saved my life."

"Are you an idiot?"

"I want to say that to the you before you came to save me."

That goes the same for me. When did you become such an naive, goody, sweet guy? It might just be as sweet as honey with sugar added into it.

Gunjou says.

"Hey, can I ask something?"

"No."

But Gunjou asks.

"Did you tell anyone else about your little sister?"

"Hn?"

"Did you tell it to Shiro, Himi, Yousuke or Kiri?"

I shake my head at that.

I have never told anyone about that.

Gunjou's face seemed to brighten at that.

"Y-You only told me huh."

"You're really irritating."

"I'm not!"

"What the hell's wrong with you for crying out loud."

"Then, if you haven't told them..... Shiro, Yousuke, Himi, Kiri..... they'll surely try to make use of your little sister."

Well, that's to be expected, I suppose.

Apocalypse Alice is the world's highest ranking labyrinth that anyone in the world would want to get their hands on.

If one can raid it and bring back magic from it, then one might be able to get one's hands on a massive amount of power that could change just about anything.

Mitsutomo Group.

Kowloon Devils Group.

Taikou Pharmaceuticals.

The Japanese government.

Shiro and the rest probably also belong to some organization. Even if I can trust Shiro, I don't know whether or not I can trust the organization behind him.

Everyone is targeting my little sister.

If I don't hurry, my little sister might just be taken to a place where I can't reach, there is a possibility that she will be used, or ended up getting killed.

Gunjou says.

"You won't **Escape**, right?"

I nod.

"I have been living for just that sake."

"For the sake of saving your little sister?"

On hearing that question, I look hard at Gunjou and say.

"It's about time for you to go back, right? There's no need for you to tag along. The situation's worse than expected."

Upon saying that, I ponder a bit on Gunjou's situation.

Gunjou probably has nowhere she can return to after **Escaping** anymore.

Since she has turned into an eternal labyrinth once.

That's the same as getting branded by the world as a calamity. On top of that, there has been no precedence of a labyrinth diseased girl getting severed from the labyrinth and returning back to normal.

Thus, if she were to go back, she would definitely be used as a guinea pig.

Or, she would be killed by the Mitsutomo Group. Since she is no longer a daughter of the Mitsutomo Group. She has fulfilled her usefulness as an experimental animal by connecting the labyrinth to Apocalypse Alice.

If word of this gets out to the public, it will look bad on Mitsutomo Group.

Thus, she would be killed the instant she leaves the labyrinth.

She no longer has a place to go back to.

Well, that goes the same for Shinnosuke, Shiro, Himi, and Yousuke.

Mitsutomo Group has a policy of killing eyewitnesses.

Therefore, if I get out of here, I will have to seek protection from an organization that is antagonistic towards Mitsutomo Group; I consider all those for a bit.

For example, Taikou Pharmaceuticals where my cousin Yayoi is at, should be uninvolved in the incident this time.

At that thought, I grimace.

"Eeh ~, seeking refuge with her? You must be kidding me."

I groan.

Gunjou says to me with a bewildered look.

"What?"

"Nothing, I'm just rambling. And Gunjou. Sorry. You shouldn't **Escape** after all."

If you get outside, you will probably get killed by those you think of as family --- I can't really say this last part to her.

However, as if she has misunderstood something, she say beaming.

"Ah, you're finally getting honest about it?"

"Hn? Ah ~, no."

"You really want this super elite Mizuiro Gunjou to help you, right?"

"Ah ~, erhm, well....."

"Jeez, you should have just asked honestly right from the beginning."

"Shut up."

I press against her lovely mouth that's babbling irritatingly.

"Mmmmphf..... hey, don't stuff your hand over my mouth!"

She says angrily to me.

I wonder how she can remain so energetic in such a situation.

Right now, we'll be killed if we **Escape** and retreat. And if we move forward, there's a rank 666 tough labyrinth waiting for us, we're really getting cornered here.

A bit of fatigue wells up in me. I relax my body a little. The magic placed on me has started to completely leave me perhaps?

"....."

I touch the area of my chest where the sword had pierced through. There is no sign of any wound. From what Shiro said based on Gunjou's account, this is some kind of restraining magic.

But I wonder why did I lose consciousness for a month. The magic's effect can only be sustained by the will of the caster.

In other words, does that mean that Kiri has been continuously sustaining this magic for a month's time?

But for what?

Why did Kiri persist in doing such a thing?

"....."

Or, could it be that the reason behind my unconsciousness is not because of Kiri's magic?

I ponder about that.

Since just now, my little sister appeared in my dream.

Since my little sister who has become the labyrinth called Apocalypse Alice, appeared.

And I remember about the time when I was a kid, when my little sister got the labyrinth disease.

I remember the words she said with a teary face.

"Don't touch me! The disease will..... the disease will infect you, Onii-chan."

Unconcerned, I touched her. I tried to save my little sister. But, she could not be saved. My little sister had said this worriedly.

"..... aah..... aah, what should we do? You got infected by a bit of it. By a bit of the Apocalypse in my head. But the time limit's already up. I can't be myself any longer. Bye bye, Onii-chan."

However, up till now, there has been no peculiar symptom of any sort. Despite my sister saying that I got infected, I have been living my daily life without paying heed to it.

But, right now, this place is connected to the Apocalypse Alice. And,

- I lost consciousness the instant it got connected.
- Despite sleeping for a month, my muscles had not wasted in any way.

Can this really be due to Kiri's magic?

Or is there another reason?

Could I have gotten infected by the Apocalypse Alice.....?

"....."

I thought it'd be fine if I got infected. I did not want my little sister to suffer by herself.

I say.

"It's about time we exit this room. We don't have time to tarry around here."

I have already tarried long enough. Since I had been sleeping for a month.

Gunjou answers.

"We'll go together."

I glance at her with half-opened eyes and say.

"Fool."

"Like I said, I could say the same to you!"

While talking, we kick the wall. The wall shakes and turns again, and we exit to the corridor outside.

"Where is the Apocalypse Alice connected to?"

"It seems like we can enter another labyrinth from the floor above."

"Hm. You have the map?"

Gunjou nods.

"It's inside my head. But beyond that....."

"You have no clue?"

"Yeah. Since it's not my labyrinth."

It's the labyrinth my little sister Saki made.

"Then let's first get there. By the way, are the monsters conjured by you still around?"

But she shakes her head.

"No. The moment when I got stabbed by the knife, all of them disappeared."

"Then, the only thing we have to be worried about are those rabbits."

I snap my fingers. Activate my 《**Headphone Fuzz**》. Both the **Demon Sword** switch and the **Acceleration Switch**.

After that, we return to the former large hall.

The rabbit is not there.

We advance along the corridor.

But the rabbit is not there.

We ascend the stairs to the floor above.

But the rabbit is not there.

Gunjou and I tense our bodies and slowly move forward, but there is no enemy at all.

"....."

And then, we suddenly reach the place where it is connected to another labyrinth.

"It's probably there."

Gunjou points.

I look in that direction and there is a hole in the wall. In the labyrinth made by Gunjou, the surface of the wall is composed of paintings of sea and blue skies with a calmly moving scenery but on the other side of the hole in the wall, it is a completely different scenery.

Grass grows.

In the middle of the sea where the horizon can be seen, a hole opens, and what comes after that is a strange scenery encroached by a forest.

"Well then, that's the Apocalypse Alice?"

Gunjou shakes her head.

"No. That's still part of my labyrinth. It is the place from where we can infiltrate the Apocalypse Alice. By the way, you should know this but this place is....."

"76 floors above ground?"

"That's right. But Apocalypse Alice is....."

I nod. Apocalypse Alice is not a tall labyrinth. In other words, if this room is connected to the Apocalypse Alice, it will be a straight drop 76 floors down to enter Apocalypse Alice.

I look at Gunjou and say.

"Eh, don't tell me there's a slide here on the 76th floor?"

Gunjou then looks up at me, shrugs her shoulders without answering me.

In other words, there's a slide.

"For real? If we slide 76 floors down, can we survive?"

We approach that hole. There is indeed a slide there. A sharply angled slope. The exit is far away and cannot be seen. But more disturbing than that, once we descend, we won't be able to get back again.

I peer down,

"..... I now know why Shiro and the rest didn't come back."

It might be because of this steep slope that they were not able to come back.

I say.

"If there's a wall en route this....."

It will be an instantaneous death from the sudden impact.

But Gunjou replies.

"The slope will get more gentle the further we descend."

"Did you make it that way?"

"Yeah, probably. I don't know. Even now, I don't know how it got connected to Apocalypse Alice....."

"You don't remember?"

"Yeah."

But Gunjou probably did that. No, it was Kujaku's magic that made Gunjou do that --- it might be better to put it in this way.

It seems like Mitsutomo Group is already able to do things like, invade the heart of labyrinth diseased girls, create and erase labyrinths, invading into other labyrinths and decrease their difficulty.

There's really an outrageous magic. It's something that greatly surpasses the magic technology that's deemed possible in the world.

And if they are able to do this much, they should already be able to save labyrinth diseased girls. They should have already been able to develop technology to save them.

But yet, they have never announced that they have saved someone. Even when the technology to save someone is there, there is no one who would attempt to save them.

What only exists is ambition. More power. Stronger magic.

More, more, more, more.

"Damn, I look like a fool when I rejoiced at the completion of the **Holy Sword** switch....."

I hit the wall of the labyrinth made by Gunjou.

At that moment, Gunjou looks up at me and says.

"..... but thanks to that, I was saved."

I smirk and reply.

"Yeah. Somebody like you."

But I can't save my little sister.....

"Hey, don't say somebody like me, would you?"

Even as she is saying that, Gunjou's face does not appear angry. She looks like she's being considerate, and worried.

Gunjou looks intently at me and says.

"I can understand your anxiety. She's family after all. Even for me....."

"You had a big sister, right? She died during a labyrinth raid. I know. I've seen your data in class."

Hearing that, Gunjou's eyes waver a little. She then says,

"..... yeah. She's my own blood relative."

She said.

She said that her big sister was her only blood relative. In other words, it seems like she knows that her parents are not her real parents. It seems like she knows that she is no lady of the Mitsutomo Group.

I look intently at her with half-opened eyes and say.

"..... meh. So you knew?"

Gunjou then smiles with a face that seems to be mocking herself.

"..... if they find out that I know about it, then I'll be killed. So you're the only one I told."

"....."

"Since you told me about your little sister."

I look hard at Gunjou. With golden hair, strong-willed eyes. But she's no strong-willed girl. She's always afraid of something. The need to get stronger. The need to answer more expectations. To get recognized by her parents --- she was so fearful that she would puke in the toilet. I finally understand the reason behind that.

Because she knew that if she did not answer their expectations, she would be killed.

I recall her profile that I learned during class.

Her recent actions were written in it.

- About how she went to karaoke for the first time with friends and how much fun she had.
- About how she cried a lot more than before.
- About how she spent more time and trained a notch harder than before after getting fired up by the rivalry she felt against her classmate Arisu Shinnosuke.

I recall her expression when we skipped training and went to the karaoke. She was stupidly having fun. Maybe that was her first time at the karaoke. That was the same for me.

I say to Gunjou.

"..... aren't we just licking each other's wounds?"

She then nods readily.

"Maybe. But I was happy that you came to save me. So much so that I almost have tears of joy....."

"Then cry."

She ignores me again.

"That's why this time..... this time, I'll be the one to protect yo....."

I cut her off and say.

"You don't need to force yourself. The possibility of dying from this is on the high end."

I say as I point to the suicidal sharp slope.

But Gunjou pouts a little at that,

"But there's no place for me to return to."

She says a little adorably.

"Are you a runaway girl from an abusive home?"

"Ah-haha."

But that is no laughing matter. She will just be killed if she goes back. She no longer has any allies.

No, if she has any allies, they would just be the group with everlasting summer in their brain matter, and who had risked their lives to save her.

For example, like the hot-blooded idiot Shiro, or the good-natured Himi, or the bespectacled Yousuke, or the big-breasted Kiri.

"....."

And also, the soft me who's softer than even candy floss.

Gunjou looks intently at me with an earnest face and says.

"..... anyway, I'll save your little sister!"

"Who the hell you think you are?"

Gunjou then grins,

"The super elite with the backing of more than 20 corporate sponsors, Mizuiro Gunjou-sama."

"Shut up runaway kid."

"Fuh-fuh-fuh."

She laughs.

She's strangely happy. Maybe it's thanks to losing a home to return to, her face looks as if she has put down a heavy baggage that she had been carrying all this while.

With that, she peers into Apocalypse Alice and says.

"..... we might be attacked by enemies as we descend. But, with the two of us....."

"We can do it? What kind of formation should we use? You are only good at long range attacks, right? Then I should be the vanguard."

But then, how is it going to be?

I visualize.

I activate my **Demon Sword** switch.

And behind me, Gunjou will continuously keep her **Sea Moon Wheel** switch activated and have them flying ahead of me.

I will use my **Demon Sword** switch to cut down only the enemies that get past **Sea Moon Wheel** switch ---

That will probably be the safest way to descend the slope.

However, in order to do that, it's important for the two of us to not get separated as we slide down. Once we get separated, we'll be defenseless.

Thus, while we slide down the 76 floors, we have to advance while sticking close to each other.

But our weights are different. Obviously, our descending speeds will be different.

In other words ---

At that moment, she moves. She goes around my back, gets onto my back. She then grabs my hair,

"All right, Shinnosuke unit, go!"

She says something irritating, and following that, I turn around, grab her slender thighs extending from her skirt.

Then,

"Kya."

She says, and jumps off my back.

With a beet red face, she says.

"W-Wh-Wh-Whaaaaaaaat're you trying to do!?"

"Don't act high and mighty and ride on my back."

"Even so, there's no need to grab my thighs, right!"

"You are too heavy so I just want to check how much fat you have."

"I'm not heavy!"

"You're 35 kg anyway right."

"How did you know my weight!?"

"I heard it in class. By the way, if you don't eat properly, your breasts won't....."

"Shut up shut up shhuuuuuuuuut uuuuuuup!"

She tries to punch me.

I grab her arm.

"I'll kill you!"

I reply to the glaring Gunjou.

"Whatever, but if we are so boisterous while we're on our way down, we'll get separated. Once we get separated, the plan's done for. We'll abandon each other then. Get it?"

Maintaining her glare, Gunjou says.

"I'll definitely not get separated from you!"

"I hope so. While we're descending, I might use **Acceleration** switch if needed. Hold on tight when that happens."

Once again, I turn my back to her.

Gunjou then says.

"I'll kill you if you touch my legs."

"Then I'll touch your butt."

"I'll kill you!"

While saying that, she jumps onto my back again. As I thought, she's as light as a feather.

Beside my ear, she utters in a strong-willed yet adorable voice.

"**Sea Moon Wheel** switch."

Upon doing that, light blue ball-like objects appear before my eyes. They start to spin and turn into discs.

The circular discs hover in the air as if protecting me.

I look up,

"Don't let them hit me."

"If you touch my butt, I'll have them hit your neck."

"Your butt doesn't look that high-class to me though."

While saying that, I start taking a step into that large hole right in the middle of the wall.

The hole for us to invade Apocalypse Alice.

The bottom of the hole cannot be seen as expected.

There is also no sign of the enemy.

But, it's not like it's dark. Even though the hole should have been surrounded by walls, from the gaps in the vegetation, sun rays seem to be seeping through; like I thought, that resembles the illustrations in the 'Alice in Wonderland' that Saki and I read a long time ago.

Apocalypse Alice is encroaching into Gunjou's labyrinth.

In that case, I don't know what kind of attack will come.

I look hard at the deep bottom of that hole.

Gunjou's adjusted breathing reaches the tip of my ear. Her breath touches my ear.

While feeling that, I say.

"Gunjou."

"What?"

"I'm sorry if I get you killed."

"..... it's fine, we're in it together."

"Then let's go."

"Yeah."

"Make sure you don't let go."

On hearing that, her left arm tighten on my neck.

"Got it."

She says.

After ascertaining her hold, we ---

Jump onto the slope that will lead us into Apocalypse Alice.

Chapter 5 - Aiming for 25 Floors Below

We descend down the slope.

Descend.

Descend.

We descend at an unbelievable speed.

If we crash into something, we'll probably die instantly. That's how fast we are descending down the slope.

In the midst of it, a rabbit jumps out.

It looks at us,

"Yaah....."

The instant it says that,

"**Sea Moon Wheel** switch!"

Yells Gunjou.

A strike slices the rabbit's face, chest, legs ---

Those are not enough to sever the rabbit, but the last hit strikes the pocket watch. The rabbit disappears.

The pocket watch of the rabbit behind is also hit by the **Sea Moon Wheel** unleashed by Gunjou.

"Orh, very good."

I say without thinking.

I can hear an utterance of *"Eh-hehe."* beside my ear.

But the exit has yet to appear. We continue accelerating. I don't think we have been descending for a really long time, but perhaps as a result of tensing up our bodies, it feels like a really long time.

A rabbit appears again.

Gunjou conjures up her **Sea Moon Wheel** again. She attacks. She manages to sever the torso of one, but fails to bring down the other.

"Sorry, Shinnosuke....."

"**Demon Sword** switch."

I swing my sword. I turn the claw thrown by the rabbit aside.

That alone is enough.

We avoid the attack of the rabbit, and zip past it. The rabbit can no longer catch up to our descending speed.

However, if we continue like this, we'll probably be killed somewhere.

"Jeez, where's the exit!?"

I bellow but the exit does not appear.

The exit can't be seen at all.

Instead, a wall made of vegetation appears before our path straight ahead.

Seeing that,

"You're kidding me!?"

My eyes widen.

Gunjou clings onto me from behind,

"W-W-Wh-Wh-Whhhaaaat should we do, Shinnosuke!?"

Whichever way it is, we can't stop. In that case,

"We have no choice but to break through right!"

"How!?"

I use the power of my **Demon Sword** switch.

"Assassination property!"

The instant I yell that, a red target mark appears in my field of vision. I look at that wall made of vegetation with those eyes.

Is there a weak place?

Is there a weak point?

Is there a place where I can slice apart with my **Demon Sword**?

And the result of the search.

There is no place where I can destroy the wall with my **Demon Sword**.

No target marker appeared.

Gunjou asks.

"How is it!?"

"No good. We'll stop here!"

I thrust my **Demon Sword** into the ground. But, it doesn't go through due to our great momentum. With my grip and the force at which I'm thrusting at the ground, it's not enough to slow our descending speed.

"Damn!?"

I yell.

At that moment,

"**Sea Moon Wheel** switch!"

Gunjou uses her magic again.

She unleashes her **Sea Moon Wheel** at the vegetation wall.

They crash into it.

However, with just that. They can't destroy the wall.

But, at a place where the wheel has struck, a target point suddenly appears.

Maybe it's because of the strike from the wheel that the wall becomes weakened, a weak point judged by my **Demon Sword** where I can slice apart with it appears.

I look hard at that.

"....."

I don't know whether the hole that will be made from my slash would be large enough for me and Gunjou's bodies to pass through.

If I stab at it with my sword, and if the resulting hole is not large enough, then Gunjou and I will probably die from the sudden impact.

Gunjou says.

"..... is this the end?"

But I ready my sword. And say.

"Hold on tight. I'm going to cut the wall.

Hearing that, Gunjou tightens her grip on me with both her hands. I can smell her scent.

The scent of sweat, nervousness, and fear.

The scent of living.

The **Acceleration** switch cursed song starts playing in my head.

The curse overflows my memory area, and the preparation for the use of the magic that boosts the memory area of my brain simply by tearing it to shreds is completed.

【*In an instant♪　In a flash♪　In the time of a flash♪*

The flash of time, the flash of an instant♪　In an instant♪　In a flash ――――】

"..... **Acceleration** switch ---"

I activate my magic.

Faster, faster, and faster than our descending speed, for an instant, for a second, in the flash of time, I control my speed.

I kick the ground.

My body accelerates.

That acceleration defies the law of physics.

Because I'm carrying Gunjou's weight, I'm a tad slower. But it's enough.

"Go... throoooouuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuggggggggggghhhhhh!"

I swing my jet black sword.

The blade thrusts into the wall.

Cutting it apart.

The wall collapses.

The hole that opens up isn't that big.

"No good huh."

As I say that, while still clinging on to me, Gunjou brings her hands forward, makes a cross and yells.

"**Defensive Tyrant** switch!"

It's the defensive magic that Gunjou often uses.

Swirling streams of water appear before her hands. They crash into the wall. The wall that has been weakened by the **Sea Moon Wheel** and**Demon Sword** gets struck by the whirlpool and is destroyed. And thus, a tight hole that's barely large enough for Gunjou and I to pass through opens.

Even so, it'd be the end if some part of our bodies get struck. Our flesh and bone will be smashed to pieces.

But, we press against each other and manage to pass through the hole somehow.

"We did it!"

Shouts Gunjou.

But we fail to land on our feet. We fall. Gunjou's body gets blown away.

"Gunjou!"

I extend my hand but can't reach her.

"Shinnosuke!"

Gunjou yells but there is nothing that can be done.

With that, while falling, we descend.

But that lasts only for a few seconds.

Ahead of the wall, the slope suddenly starts becoming gentle.

"Gah, ah, oof....."

I crash into the ground, tumbling down, but I can clearly feel that my descending speed is dropping.

Two seconds later.

I can't do anything but tumble.

But at the third second, I push against the ground with my arm. Following that, I plant my feet onto the ground. And prop myself up. I can do this. I can control my balance. MY descending speed has also become pretty slow.

"All....."

Just as I am about to utter *all right* and recover my posture,

"Kyaaaaa."

Gunjou crashes into me from behind,

"Owah."

I tumble again. Gunjou grabs on to me tightly and I can't regain my balance at all.

"Hey, idiot, let go of me."

"Eh, eh, but, you said not to let go....."

"You know, if you haven't grabbed onto me, I would have regained my balance."

"Eh? Ah....."

Gunjou lets go of me there and then. After tumbling down a few rounds, she manages to plant my slender feet onto the ground. And stands up.

I too stand up at the same time.

We are still sliding down the slope, but I grab Gunjou's hand and after that,

"**Demon Sword** switch."

I murmur.

I thrust the sword that appeared in my hand. *Zuh zuh zuh*, as the sword rips through the ground, we come to a stop.

Then,

"..... haah, we survive."

I sigh out.

Gunjou then too sighs out in relief, and then smiles happily,

"Hey."

She says wearily.

I would probably have been killed by the rabiits if I hadn't descended with Gunjou. I also wouldn't have been able to break through the wall without her **Sea Moon Wheel** switch.

In other words, it's thanks to her that I'm still alive now.

Thinking about that,

"....."

I get an exasperated sense of the limits of fighting alone. Though of course, I wouldn't have attempted something so reckless if I were alone.

I turn to face the wall made of vegetation behind me and say.

"..... if Shiro was with us, this would probably have been a breeze."

Gunjou then looks at me and says.

"What do you mean by that huh?"

She somehow seems miffed. But I say.

"No, I mean, if we had his **Thousand Deities Flash of Light** switch....."

As I say that,

"Ah....."

Gunjou too makes an utterance of realization.

If it was Shiro's **Thousand Deities Flash of Light** switch, a gigantic offensive magic that would become a drill, which we would have been able to use to advance as we thrust forward, while impaling the walls, rabbits, and everything.

On top of that, he has someone who's skilled in support magic, Himi, on his team. And with her, we would have been able to anticipate to a certain extent the layout ahead.

Furthermore, the relentless onslaught of the enemies would have been suppressed by the defensive magic of Yousuke.

Maybe because it hit her at that moment, Gunjou says.

"Why aren't they around when it really counts!"

I smile and agree.

"Yeah right. After spouting all that 'comrades' stuff, they should make sure they are here when it really matters."

"How true."

Gunjou and I look at each other as we say that, and exchange tired smiles at our narrow escape from the fear of death for once now.

However, hereon, we will surely experience that fear of death in succession.

Even though we have no idea by how many ranks the Mitsutomo Group has weakened Apocalypse Alice, it shouldn't be that low of a rank.

If that's the case, there will definitely be tougher fights henceforth.

"....."

I look to the front.

The end of the slope is near.

The exit can already be seen. On the other side, a hall inside the Apocalypse Alice can be seen.

A dense and luxuriant forest.

But that forest does not feel real, but has the feel of woods out of an artbook.

Gentle rays of sunlight filtering through the trees.

A uniform green that appears to be colored with a single paint.

However, death is probably overflowing in that place.

It's really a place that should not be entered normally. It is a place that should only be advanced to, after finding a safe zone, getting organized and using it as a base for repeated insertions and **Escapes**.

But if we were to do that, we probably won't make it in time.

According to Gunjou, Kujaku and her gang had brought along large supplies of water and food to challenge this labyrinth. In other words, they didn't want to waste time **Escaping** and wanted to raid it at one go.

As to why.

I can think of a few reasons.

For example, if they were to leave this place, the is a possibility of information of Gunjou's labyrinth being connected to Apocalypse Alice might get leaked.

Or perhaps, this incident has already been found out by other countries and corporations and there's a fierce raiding competition taking place inside Apocalypse Alice right now.

"But it's probably not the later....."

Otherwise, by now, it won't be strange for our surroundings to be filled with people who want to raid Apocalypse Alice.

Then is it the former --- or.

"In the first place, it might even be possible that both insertion and escape are impossible right now."

That would be the worst development I could hope for.

If we don't clear it, we can't **Escape** ---

In other words, if we can't clear it, we can only die.

But, that in itself is also possible.

In unknown high level labyrinth like Apocalypse Alice, it's possible that it might have a special property that prevents **Escaping**.

"....."

I try playing the **Escape** cursed song in my head. Playing it for real. As if I'm really going to **Escape**. But I can't use it. If I were to exit the labyrinth, there's a possibility that I may be unable to enter it again.

A more likely possibility would be that, the magic which Kujaku has used has the power to stop infiltration and escape.

If it's me, I'd do that. If I gotten my hands on Apocalypse Alice, I will act carefully to prevent this from getting leaked to other organizations.

Those who entered can't go out.

The other organizations can't come in.

If I'm able to set my magic to do such a thing, I'll set it.

While playing the cursed **Escape** song in my head, once again, I ponder about the water and food supplies that Kujaku had prepared.

For what purpose did she do that?

Is it because they can't **Escape**?

Or is it because, while they can **Escape**, they can't re-infiltrate?

"Well, at any rate, I have no intention of escaping."

At any rate, even if I **Escape**, there'll be no allies waiting for me outside. There is no time to gather hundreds of mercenaries. During then, either the Mitsutomo Group or other countries or corporations will be making off with my little sister.

Or my little sister will get used and then killed.

If that happens, I'll never see my little sister again.

In other words, it's now.

I have to save her now.

Even though I really want to spend more time, slowly moving in as if I were cornering the king in Shogi.

"..... things don't go that well in reality huh."

At that moment,

"What are you mumbling to yourself?"

Gunjou asks.

I answer.

"Just bitching about our situation."

"Uwah, how gloomy."

"Haha, I don't deny it....."

Before I could finish, a noise suddenly rings out in my head.

Piih piih piih, the sound of a machine.

A sound which I've never heard before.

I tense up my body in response to that. I thought it would mean that the enemies from Apocalypse Alice will be upon us again.

"What is that sound?"

I say.

Gunjou too tenses up her entire body and asks.

"What sound?"

"You can't hear it?"

"Where?"

Seems like Gunjou can't hear it. Then, what is that sound?

Just as I am pondering about that, my vision sways. The scenery to my upper diagonal left contorts as if there is some sort of interference.

"Wh-what?"

A window-like thing suddenly opens up there.

In that window, float the words

《Incoming transmission》.

Seems like that is something displayed by my 《**Headphone Fuzz**》 in my mind.

I can then hear a voice.

"Hey Shin..... ke..... hear..... hey....."

The interference is really bad.

But I know that voice.

It belongs to the scientist who made my 《**Headphone Fuzz**》s and the **Holy Sword** swtich, Liezel Baimeister.

But that's not possible. Due to the powerful radio wave barrier arisen from inside of the labyrinth, all kinds of transmission devices should be rendered useless.

But yet, Liezel is calling out to me.

"..... that inteference..... a sec..... I'll fix..... now."

Gunjou looks at me with questioning eyes.

I answer.

"I'm somehow getting a transmission in my 《**Headphone Fuzz**》."

"Huh? Transmission? From who? We're inside the labyrinth, you know?"

I know what she's trying to say. But since a transmission came in, I don't have a choice.

"Ah ~, it's my German friend. You've met him before."

Gunjou should have met him before her labyrinth disease onset.

"Wait, that guy in the foreign automobile.....? Though he was at the back and I couldn't quite see him then."

I nod. At that moment, the transmission resumes.

"..... aah aah, how is this? Is this good?"

I say.

"I can hear you. That aside, how did you manage this? This is the labyrinth, isn't it? What happened to the radio jamming?"

"Who do you think I am?"

"A perverted scientist."

"Call me a super genius scientist."

I shrug. Though I don't know whether or not Liezel is seeing me do that.

But at that moment, in the window, Liezel shows up in a camera that's looking down on us.

He's a German with eyes that are no less unpleasant than mine. Like me, he's also sixteen. Blond hair, green eyes.

Those eyes take me in and he says.

"What's the meaning behind that shrug? I'll kill you, you know?"

Seems like he can see me. Liezel has managed to develop the technology for transmitting into the labyrinth.

"When did you succeed in developing this?"

*"Three days ago. The receiving unit was completed two years ago, so I put one into your 《**Headphone Fuzz**》."*

"Don't put in random stuff without asking."

Liezel cackles in glee.

"By the way, since I've also managed to develop a self-destruction magic that can be triggered by a remote, I'll put it in next time."

"Hey, I'm kind of busy here and have no time to play games with you....."

"I know. You've been so busy these three days in raiding Apocalypse Alice that you had been ignoring my transmissions right?"

"..... you knew? Where did you hear it from?"

But, Liezel opens his arms and says delightedly.

"Where did I hear it from? The whole world is in an uproar about this."

Seems like the information about Apocalypse Alice becoming raidable has leaked out to the outside world.

With this, I can draw a conclusion from my earlier ruminations.

The fact that no one has yet to infiltrate the labyrinth is because they can't enter it yet.

Since if what's happening here is already made public, then the organizations throughout the world should have already infiltrated the labyrinth by now.

And if the labyrinth can't be re-infiltrated, then I can't **Escape**. I have to reach my little sister faster than anyone else, and use my **Holy Sword** switch to sever her from the labyrinth.

I say.

"I don't have time for idle chat."

"There you go again, without a genius like me, it'd impossible for you to raid Alice right?"

So that's what it's about. Liezel also wants a piece of it. He wants the magic that can be retrieved from Apocalypse Alice.

"What genius. Mitsutomo group developed a highly sophisticated magic to make use of a labyrinth diseased girl before you did. You lost."

On hearing that, Liezel's face turns really sour and he looks at me.

"Be careful of what you say, Shinnosuke. I could already make something like that before."

"Liar."

"I'm not lying. I could already make something like that before!"

Liezel says in a child-like manner.

I reply.

"Then, why didn't you make it? It's a magic that I needed."

But Liezel says to that.

"It's because you were an idiot and didn't ask me."

"..... ah?"

"I'd have made it if you had asked. But you didn't."

"Well, it's true that I didn't ask but....."

*"Besides, instead of making use of a labyrinth diseased girl, the magic to sever her from the labyrinth without killing her is much more, much more difficult. Of course, Mitsutomo's magic that can weaken the Apocalypse Alice is pretty amazing, but **Holy Sword** switch is a much higher level magic."*

That might indeed be true. In the first place, since I suppose that there is no organization that will be capricious enough to develop a magic that would be used to save a labyrinth diseased girl, I won't know whether other organizations would be able to develop one, or whether they would be interested in developing one.

Liezel says.

*"By the way, you've used the **Holy Sword** switch right? How did it go?"*

"....."

I did not answer.

But Liezel grins,

*"Don't tell me that you've managed to save the labyrinth diseased girl huh? If the **Holy Sword** switch was a success, then you shouldn't be complaining about all those things to me right?"*

I look at Gunjou beside me. She has been severed from the labyrinth, and is still alive.

She's well and still human.

The **Holy Sword** switch was a complete success.

That was indeed an amazing thing.

And Liezel probably knows that. He grins. And says while smiling.

"So, how was it?"

"....."

"Hurry up and tell me the outcome, Shinnosuke."

"..... I'm sorry for saying too much earlier."

I say softly. While I said it softly, it should still be audible. Since it was transmitted via by my 《**Headphone Fuzz**》.

But Liezel just makes a really delighted face and turns his ear to me.

"Huh? What? What did you just say?"

".....You heard me right?"

"Who's the genius?"

"....."

He is a thoroughly irritating guy. Who the hell requested him to develop magic?

"I'm hanging up."

On hearing that, with a satisfied face, Liezel says,

"Well don't do that. I didn't call you to brag about what has already been established as a fact. There's something else."

"I'd have guessed. So what's up?"

Liezel then waves his finger. The camera that has been aiming at Liezel moves. Seems like it's a lab. Lots of devices are strewn about messily.

Among the devices is a small TV. A news program is showing on its screen. The newscaster has a ghastly pale face. Her voice trembles.

"Today America made a declaration. If Japan continues to monopolize 《Apocalypse 666》--- commonly known as 《Apocalypse Alice》, then they will prepare to take military action to punish the Japanese government ---"

At that moment, the camera swings back to Liezel. Liezel says in a really delighted manner.

"Did you see that? Things have become surprisingly merry right? But right now, it's not like the Japanese government has gotten control of 《Apocalypse Alice》. So they can't hand it over. If they can't hand it over, it'll become a full-fledged war. It'd be the end of Japan. According to my intel, America's going to fire missiles tonight."

This is worst possible development.

That's how fearful the world is of the magic that can be obtained from the Apocalypse Alice.

Liezel continues.

"And Japan will surrender. But will there be any meaning to that? Since 10 years ago, when the 'Diversionary Magic Spoils of Labyrinths' had been brought back, this peaceful country has already crumbled. The ones who hold power are the corporations. Such as Mitsutomo Group or Taikou Pharmaceuticals. Thus, the missile will probably be fired at Mitsutomo Group I guess. And it will begin from there. The race to raid Apocalypse Alice by the various organizations of the world. If that happens, it'll become even more dangerous than now. Because the enemy is human....."

But at that moment, Liezel smiles.

"Wait, well, you're used to killing other humans in the labyrinth anyway."

That's right.

Those were the only places I had been.

The only things I had seen to date were countrymen, fellow colleagues, radicals, mercenaries, terrorists, religious organizations clashing with one another, killing one another and snatching away power and technology.

Amongst them, those who stuck to ideals of love, romance, friendship lost.

Since there was none who was rational.

A moment of hesitation would cost your life.

I stare at Liezel and say.

"So, why're you telling me all this? Do you also want a piece of that power?"

But Liezel smiles and says.

"No way, I have no interest in obtained power. I don't know how amazing this Apocalypse Alice is, but I can make even more powerful magic from scratch."

But I didn't tell him to 'just hurry up and do it then'. I can't afford the time to engage in any more needless conversation with him.

There are many enemies.

The organizations in the world would find a way to enter Apocalypse Alice and would invade it in hordes.

I have to save my little sister before that happens.

I say.

"Just spit it out already."

On hearing that, Liezel says,

"Well ~ won't it be delightful to find everyone surprised and disappointed when the puppet I'm controlling brings back a girl whom he severs from the labyrinth, without bring back any magic from this place which the whole world is paying so much attention to?"

What a really twisted way of thinking.

It's not normal.

Not wanting something that everyone wants.

Not wanting magic that could be used to conquer the world.

To find it interesting to disappoint someone.

But, it's because of that I say to him,

"Yeah, that's a nice way of thinking. That's what I love about you."

To which Gunjou looks at me with a dumbfounded expression. I ignore her.

Liezel says.

"Haha, right? But I'm not happy about you loving me."

"I'm fine with that. And so?"

"I'll back you up. Let's clear it in the fastest possible way."

"There we go again. More tangibly, what're you providing me?"

"The map of Apocalypse Alice."

"What."

"I've scanned it. I'm sending it. I also grasp our rivals' positions during the scan."

If that's true, it'd be some really incredible intel. And also, technology-wise, it's pretty unworldly. Since he is able to transmit with some unknown technology sounds, pictures, and data into a labyrinth where signals are jammed.

Liezel looks at me and says.

"Now, you should praise me for sending you the map data. Who's the genius scientist again?"

"....."

"And where's your thanks? If you don't say it, I won't send the data to you you know?"

I scowl at his words.

"What the hell's wrong with you. Then, you'll be satisfied if I thank you?"

"Yeah, that's right."

"..... tch..... thank....."

But, Liezel cuts me off and says in delight.

"Shut up trash. Your thanks aren't even worth crap."

"Aah!?"

"Hahaha, I'm going to send you the data."

He snaps his fingers.

Instantly, I can tell that something is getting forced into my head.

My head hurts.

A terrible pain assaults my brain.

"Guh..... ah, hey, wait. My head....."

"I'll be laughing if your mind gets destroyed. Since there's a 70 percent chance of that happening."

70 percent!?

"D-Damn you....."

A detailed map surfaces in my head. It's a huge labyrinth.

It's a labyrinth with 425 floors underground.

And star marks are present in various places.

There are about forty of them.

They are probably the locations of the other raiders.

Kujaku should have brought 100 people with her. But the numbers were already down by more than half.

Did they **Escape**?

Or die?

I don't know.

Kujaku was 33 floors below.

And separated from Kujaku's group, 25 floors below, were 3 star marks.

They were probably Shiro, Yousuke, and Himi.

They are alive. At the very least, during the time when Liezel made the scan.

More information pours in.

They are data on the traps.

Data on hidden doors.

Data on safe zones.

"....."

Even the information on the location of my little sister Saki is also sent.

I forget my pain upon receiving that. My eyes widen in disbelief at the fact that I am now just within an arms' length to where my little sister was.

Saki was just 35 floors below. It's a considerably shallow location.

I can feel my pulse racing.

As it's not far away from where Kujaku was. If I don't hurry, it'd be too late ---

But, as if he has read my thoughts, Liezel says.

"The raiders from Mitsutomo group have been stuck at the 33rd floor below for more than 10 days."

My headache disappears. As all the data has been transmitted.

I ask.

"What's there?"

"Orhh, I did it. I managed to send everything without killing you. This is the first time I've succeeded with a human subject. Which means my research on this has adva....."

"Whatever, just answer me. What's down there?"

"Who knows? I have no idea."

"You even acquired the locations of traps and hidden doors and you don't know this?"

"I don't know. And it's not like I'm looking at it. But I can tell you this, up until the 33rd floor below, there weren't that many fatalities."

But now, there are only 40 people. Which means that Kujaku lost more than half her men there.

"Do you also know the rank of the labyrinth?"

"I know. It's 15. If it's you, you should be able to clear it easily right?"

Provided that that's its true rank. It won't be that easy but I can clear it. And it's probably the same for Kujaku and her gang, and Shiro they all. Since Gunjou's labyrinth which we were raiding earlier is a rank 42.

However, for a whole month, none of the raiders have come out.

"The rank can't be trusted huh."

"And it's a value measured by a machine so to speak."

"And, is there anything else? Shall we start our 6 hour lesson on labyrinth diseased girl raiding here?"

"No, I've already given you plenty of intel. The rest is up to you. If you fail, it's your responsibility. If you succeed, thank me."

He smiles and cuts off the transmission.

Liezel disappears from my vision.

The only things I can see now are the scenery of the corridor before me and the Gunjou beside me.

"What's that about?"

She asks to which I reply.

"..... the map of the labyrinth was somehow sent into my brain."

"Huh, how can such a....."

How can such a thing be possible.

That's right. If something like that is possible, then we won't need any lesson. But practical usage is probably still far ahead in the future. A technology that can destroy the brain with a 70 percent chance can only be used in urgent situations.

But right now, it is urgent. An urgent situation where it's worth trying with just a 30 percent chance of success.

Kujaku and her people had reached the 33rd floor below half a month ago. To put it in another way, they took half a month to reach the 33rd floor below.

But if we have the map, and if it's really a rank 15 labyrinth, then we can catch up to her in no time.

Gunjou says.

"..... who in the world was that?"

"A pervert scientist."

"E-Erhm..... Shinnosuke I say....."

"Hn?"

"Erhm..... you did say..... you love that guy or something....."

"Ah?"

"D-Do you swing that way?"

I look at her in exasperation, then start walking.

"Yeah, right. Didn't you notice? That's why I have no interest in girls. Can you stay away from me?"

While catching up to me, Gunjou says.

"Wait, erhm, I, won't be prejudiced towards you....."

"Shut up. It's not that. I was just being sarcastic. Rather, it's not the time for this right?"

As I say that, she looks up at me,

"Eh? Eh? It's not?"

"Just shut up already."

"It's not huh. I see. That's a relief....."

"I thought you said you wouldn't be prejudiced?"

"Ah, no, I don't mean that....."

"Meh, what's wrong with you?"

Anyway, we don't have time to tarry around here. We have to make up for the lost month. But if we let our guard down, we'll be killed.

I don't know yet whether this labyrinth is really a rank 15 one. Well, even so, the rabbits that had assaulted us till now weren't strong enough to reflect a much higher ranked labyrinth.

I say to the Gunjou who is following behind me.

"I heard it's a rank 15."

"Eh!? So low!? Then, the labyrinth might have been clear....."

But I shake my head.

"But Mitsutomo Group is stalled on the 33rd floor below."

"You know even that?"

Gunjou's eyes widen.

"I also know the locations of traps, hidden doors, and even the locations of Shiro and the rest. They are on the 25th floor below."

On hearing that, her face turns into one of suspicion,

"Is that info reliable? Could that guy be bribed by Mitsutomo Group....."

"No, it's impossible."

I deny the possibility immediately. Liezel isn't someone who would get bought over and obediently follow Mitsutomo Group's orders.

But, maybe as a result of me refuting her a little too vehemently,

"Ah, sorry..... you trust that guy huh."

Gunjou says, but --- to use the word 'trust' on that pervert scientist is way too unbefitting on him.

"No, even though he isn't someone who could be bribed by Mitsutomo Group, but, he's someone who would take pleasure in deceiving me and laughing at my failures, so your concern is not pointless. Let's be careful. The map, the traps, hidden doors, all the intel might be fake --- have that in mind as we act."

Gunjou then nods.

"Got it. But on that map....."

"Yeah. Shiro's position was indicated on it. So, let's first try to meet up with Shiro and the rest."

We then nod at each other and start running.

♦

But the raid itself is simple.

It is indeed a rank 15 labyrinth.

The enemy is made up of only those rabbits. And the frequency of their appearance is not that high. There has not been any problem, no sense of danger.

The only problem is that each labyrinth floor is huge.

Just huge.

Because there is no scale on the map, I have underestimated it. This labyrinth can't be cleared easily.

Everywhere we look, a beautiful forest makes up our surroundings.

We initially ran without stopping in the forest, and before long, we got tired and finally switched to walking.

In one day, clearing 4 floors is the limit.

As the rabbit attack us every now and then, we have to set up a watch and take turns sleeping. It's impossible to clear more than 4 floors. At this rate, it will be 9 days before we reach the floor Kujaku is at.

9 days.

Only 9 days.

"....."

But that figure is a figure of despair.

Because we are short on food supplies.

Fortunately, for water, along the way, we found a tank that was probably left by Kujaku's group. It was tough to carry it but it contains about 10 liters of water. If we ration it carefully, it will probably last us.

But there was no food.

We won't last for 9 days without food.

"....."

But, two days went by without us eating anything.

We can't carry on like that. Even if we manage to advance with just water, by the time we reach our objective, we won't have enough energy to fight. It's just impossible.

We should either **Escape** here or eat something.

"....."

And at that moment, we see a walking deer in the forest.

Different from the rabbits that have pocket watches --- it's just a normal looking deer.

The deer does not notice us.

If we use our magic, we can probably kill it easily.

"....."

That is provided that it is a normal deer.

If this were not a labyrinth and we were inside a normal forest, then it would probably be all right to just kill and eat it.

But this is a labyrinth.

That deer is a product of this labyrinth.

I don't know what kind of ill effects it will have on the body if we eat it.

"....."

I look hard at that deer, then look at Gunjou. She looks more lively than me. Maybe it's because of her small body, she probably needs less calories than me. But I'm already near my limit.

Gunjou looks up at me and says.

"What should we do?"

I say.

"You should **Escape**."

"It's better not to eat that deer?"

"Yeah. Neither should we eat those fruits with poisonous looking colors on the trees."

I look up at the sky. On the trees, are fruit resembling apples with colorful colors of red, blue, yellow, purple, and pink.

Those are definitely the same fruits that appeared in the illustrations of the book of 'Alice in Wonderland' that I had read with my little sister in the past.

Gunjou looks up at them,

"I guess I don't really want to eat those pink and purple stuff."

She says and smiles.

I say.

"We shouldn't eat them. Activate your **Escape** switch."

"But if I get out."

"You'll be killed? But, if you get out, there's still a chance of escaping. But if you remain here, you'll definitely starve to death."

"Even if I eat those apples?"

"I already said you can't eat them."

"But Shinnosuke, you're going to eat them right? The apples and deer."

On hearing that question, I smirk and reply.

"Since they are apples and deer made by family, I won't be affected."

Gunjou then looks up at me with half-opened eyes, and following that, she waves her fingers. And mutters.

"**Sea Moon Wheel** switch."

Moon wheels appear above Gunjou's head, and they cut down the fruit from the trees. Several fruit drop down, and Gunjou takes two from them.

A pink apple and a blue apple.

She starts putting the blue one into her mouth.

"I already told you don't do it! You might catch the labyrinth disease."

I stop her hand.

But she says.

"I've already have a labyrinth disease onset once."

"That's not the issue here....."

But, at that moment, a moon wheel flies towards me. As it is about to slice my head off,

"Owah."

I dodge it frantically. I take a step backward.

"What the heck are you....."

But Gunjou just grins and says.

"If I die, **Escape** by yourself."

"Hey, wait!"

But, a crunching sound is heard and she eats the apple. She munches a few times with an expression of wonder. It's already too late. The juice has probably already entered her stomach. It is just insane to eat something found inside the labyrinth.

The possibility of dying right away.

The possibility of turning into a monster.

The possibility of getting an unknown disease.

But with a smiling face,

"It's totally an apple though!"

She laughs.

I look intently at her with with disgusted face,

"Have you heard of the saying that foolhardiness does not equate to courage?"

"Yay."

She brings up and shows me the apple,

"Yay? Jeez. How do you feel?"

Gunjou shrugs her shoulders and says.

"Uhn. Seems all right. But maybe there'll be some side effects later."

"If you know that, you shouldn't have eaten it duh."

While saying that, I too pick up a blue apple.

"..... at the very least, it smells like an apple."

"The one who doesn't eat it is a chicken."

I put the apple in my mouth. Even the taste is that of an apple. And it's even pretty tasty. It's more tasty than any apple I had eaten before.

Maybe it's because my stomach is empty, or maybe it's because my little sister has set these trees to bear tasty apples; whichever it is, I do not know.

But I somehow get the feeling that if it's my little sister, she would want to make these apples tasty.

Gunjou looks at the deer and says.

"Do we get the deer too?"

I shake my head.

"There's no need to take any further risk. Even for the apples, we'll pick the blue ones. If it's for 9 days or so, we should be able to manage with just apples."

The problem with food is promptly solved.

"Then, let's go."

Gunjou says.

I nod.

And we start walking.

Along the way, I say.

"I still think that you probably shouldn't have eaten the apples there."

Gunjou then replies immediately.

"It's because the unmanly guy doesn't want to eat it first."

Indeed. She's quite right about that.

I shrug my shoulders, and hurry on ahead.

Interlude 1 - Fairy Tale

Night.

Just before the napping time when we each take a 4-hour watch.

The stars we can see in between the trees are amazing. Probably orchestrated by my little sister.

I keep watch by the campfire.

It's Gunjou's turn to sleep.

But yet Gunjou says.

"..... hey, Shinnosuke."

"Quickly sleep."

"I can't sleep. Tell me a story."

"What's wrong with you? I'm not your Mama."

"I'm fine with Momotaro."

"..... why that choice?"

"'Alice in Wonderland' is a western story so I don't feel like hearing that."

"Well, I can agree on that."

"And also, my late big sis would tell me a story when I couldn't sleep in the past. My Papa and Mama..... my parents won't do such a thing though..... my big sis is always kind to me."

"..... she's dead because she was kind; that's what happens in this world."

"Yeah."

"And so, I don't want to die so I won't be kind so forget about Momotaro."

"Ehh."

"All right good night. Hurry up and sleep, otherwise I'll tell you 'Alice in Wonderland'."

"Please don't."

"Good night."

"Uhn. Good night."

Gunjou falls asleep.

Interlude 2 - Fairy Tale

Night.

Just before the napping time when we each take a 4-hour watch.

Gunjou keeps watch by the campfire.

It's my turn to sleep.

But I can't seem to get to sleep. My body is tensed up. Naturally. Since I've been moving the whole day in a labyrinth. The adrenaline in my brain can't seem to dissipate.

But since I'm not a kid, I'm not looking for someone to tell me a story just because I can't sleep.

I merely look up vacantly at the star-filled sky that my little sister created.

"..... hey, Shinnosuke, are you awake?"

"....."

"Hey."

"....."

"You're awake right?"

"I'm asleep."

"Aren't you awake?"

"I'm almost asleep."

"You can't sleep?"

"You were the one who woke me right?"

"If you can't sleep, shall I tell you the story of Momotaro?"

"No need."

"Long long ago."

"I said I don't need it."

"On Mount Ashigara, lives an energetic boy who won't lose to even a bear....."

"That's not Momotaro. That's Kintaro duh."

"Eh? It's the guy who carries a hatchet you know?"

"It's more and more like Kintaro. You've been tricked by your big sis."

"No way. Erhm, it goes like this? He carries a hatchet, and brings along a dog, monkey, pheasant, and a bear ---"

"That's one too many!"

"Hey, why are you laughing!?"

"Because I can't sleep, and you're cracking me up."

"Like I was saying, what's so funny!?"

"Aah, but, carry on with that story. I'm curious. What happen in the end?"

"Erhm, uhm, in the end, with the power of the magic hammer, everyone became as big as the ogre and fought with him..... but Momotaro ended up opening the treasure chest of the ogre..... hey, like I said, what's so funny!?"

"No no, I think it's a great story. It's like this right? Your big sis was extending the story until you fall asleep right?"

"..... yeah."

"What a great big sister....."

"Yeah."

"And also, it's a great story."

"Really?"

"Yeah. Ah, by the way, didn't the crane pay back her debt in gratitude?"

"Why would a crane appear in Momotaro?"

"You're telling me that now? If a bear appeared, then you can add a crane too."

"I don't get it though."

"I'm the one who don't get it. Erhm, Gunjou."

"Hn?"

"Can I sleep?"

"No."

"Hey."

"Kidding. Good night."

"All right. Good night."

But I can't sleep. I look up the nape of Gunjou.

Then I look up at the sky again.

Gunjou's big sister is also dead.

My little sister is being targeted to fulfill the world's desires.

Good guys die. Once you start being kind to someone, death creeps up on you. This is such a world.

But, Gunjou is kind.

Shiro too, Himi too, Yousuke too, Kiri too, every person in the Hero Team is kind. Therefore, death is probably upon everyone.

I don't know when we'll die. Maybe Gunjou, as well as myself, will die tomorrow in this labyrinth.

At that time, what would everyone think about 'trying to act kindly towards others', I wonder?

Even though they wouldn't have died if they didn't act kindly, I wonder whether they would regret it?

"....."

But, in the end everyone will die someday.

In the labyrinth.

In an accident.

From an illness.

Of old age.

Someday, everyone will die.

But since we'll die anyway, rather than dying meaningless, it might be better to die with some meaning.

Like dying for someone else.

Like dying without betraying anyone.

Like dying from being kind to others.

On the brink of death, one would probably regret more from doing nothing than from doing something.

Then, it might be better for a person to be kind.

Even if when death is nearby, it might feel a lot better to work hard and die for someone than to die alone.

After all, even for Momotaro, he had comrades when he defeated the ogre.

Like the dog, monkey, pheasant, bear, and crane.

I won't add another two birds as well.

Even if when death is nearby, at the very least, be kind to someone.

"..... Gunjou."

"Hn?"

"..... no, it's nothing."

I murmur softly.

Chapter 6 - Apocalypse Alice

Seven days later.

We reached the 25th floor below.

It is where Shiro and the rest are --- or rather, where Shiro and the rest are shown on the map a week ago. But they were already gone. Of course. It has been one week since then.

Once we passed the 20th floor below, water and food supplies were no longer a problem.

Since the food and water supplies that the Kansai team dropped were left lying around.

There was probably a fierce fight. A number of dead bodies were lying around. We took some of the backpacks from the dead bodies. The backpacks contained clothing, toiletries, food, and stuff needed for staying in the labyrinth.

"....."

I whip out a chocolate bar from the backpack I am shouldering. 300 calories. With nuts. I take a bite. The crunchy feel of the nuts swirl around in my mouth deliciously.

Perhaps, as a result of eating only apples for five days, the artificial processed sugar stimulated my brain matter strongly. After finishing up the rest of the chocolate bar in one go, I take out a butter-and-jam bread roll next.

"..... haha, this is so good that I'm going to turn into a pig."

While saying that, I grin stupidly.

The bread roll is also crazily delicious. While munching on my bread, I look up at the sky.

On the 25th floor below, there are few trees.

It is made up of grass plains. On the endless grass plains, trees stand sparsely.

Leaning against such a tree, I eat my bread roll.

"..... guh, muh."

As I was gobbling away too quickly, my food got stuck in my throat. It's agonizing. Even as I hammer on my chest, it doesn't go down. I frantically swallow some water,

"..... uuh-ah, that was dangerous..... I almost died, what a joke."

And I put the bread roll back into mouth again.

Behind me, I can hear the splashing sounds of water. Gunjou is soaking her towel with water, and wiping her body with it. Since there is spare clothing in the backpacks, she intends to get a change of clothing it seems. Well, it's understandable since it's been a week --- no, it has been 37 days since we entered the labyrinth. We hadn't bathed all this while. It's no wonder she would want to wash her body.

But,

"Not done yet?"

I say.

Gunjou then replies.

"Hey, don't look here. I still haven't put on my clothes yet!"

"I'm not looking. Right now, I'm more keen in satisfying my stomach hunger rather than my sexual hunger. There's not much to see anyway."

"What did you say!"

"I'm stating a fact."

"Wha, of course there would be things to see!"

"Then I'll look."

"I'll kill you if you do!"

"So which is it?"

I take another bite at my bread.

I then look up at the sky.

The sun rays are strong. At this rate, I feel like taking a nap. Eat, sleep, eat, sleep, I feel like just repeating this for half a year.

"Fuh-wah....."

A yawn escapes my lips.

But I don't have the luxury of time. One week has already passed. Even though Liezel has not contacted me, there is a chance that Kujaku has reached my little sister.

Or, there's a possibility that challengers from other corporations are already right behind us.

Thus, we have no time to tarry around.

"Gunjou, we should get moving."

"Wait, a sec, just a little more....."

Just as she says that, a voice rings out.

"Yaah yaah, yaah yaah."

The voice of a rabbit. The voice is the direction of where Gunjou is. An enemy. A battle. I snap my fingers, and activate my 《**Headphone Fuzz**》.

But Gunjou says.

"Hey hey hey, wait! Don't face here! I still haven't put on my..... hey, this rabbit, is strong!?"

While yelling, Gunjou falls back.

"Hn?"

Gunjou has her blouse in her right hand and skirt in her left hand.

She is only in her underwear. Slender legs. Slender waist. Her chest is bigger than I thought. Her fair skin has a pale pink tinge.

I look at her with half-opened eyes.

Gunjou looks at me with a beet-red face.

"Hey, don't look here dummy!"

"You're the one showing me, you exhibitionist."

"I'm going to wear them! I'm going to wear them now so buy me some time! And it doesn't die even after destroying the pocket watch!"

I stand up and turn around.

The usual rabbit is there.

In its right paw is a broken pocket watch.

Its left paw has claws extended.

"....."

The left and right are swapped as compared the usual. The usual rabbit would have a pocket watch in its left paw. Maybe it's at a higher level. Once again, I use the assassination property.

Upon doing that, a red target appears not on the pocket watch, but on its ear.

"Just as thought, it's a different type."

But it's only one. Maybe another is hidden behind it.

"Gunjou, for now, the weak point is at its ear. Back me up once you get dressed."

"**Sea Moon Wheel** switch!"

While getting dressed, she activates her magic. I look at her, and she's not completely dressed yet. She is just about to put on her skirt, and her panties are completely visible. Her face turns red as she notices my gaze,

"Don't look here!"

"Did you poop in your panties....."

"I didn'ttttttttt!"

I smile and start running.

The rabbit turns its attention to me. It ascertains my speed. Swings its paws. Its speed is overwhelmingly faster than mine but, it can't be helped with the current me.

"**Acceleration** switch."

I say. My whole body accelerates. With that, I swing my **Demon Sword**. And that is the end. I slice off the rabbit's ear.

The rabbit is annihilated.

But behind it, as if in layers, the hidden rabbits appear.

7 of them.

"So many!?"

My eyes widen. I swing my sword. Trying to land a blow to the ear. But, the rabbit turns its ear aside. My blade brushes against its head. These fellows are aware of their weakness. They are trying to deal with my attack appropriately.

Strong. If a large bunch of them are attacking us at this level, it might be a little bad, but,

"If it's just seven, I can do this."

I swing my sword trying to graze the pulled back ear.

One flash, two flashes. Three flashes.

With that, I dealt with five of them. Two of them are left. I turn around.

The two of them are heading towards Gunjou.

But I did not worry.

Since we know their weak points. Gunjou can deal with them. She is strong enough that I can leave my back to her without worrying --- that should be the case but,

"Wah wah wah wah wah, you're kidding me, wait a sec!?"

Gunjou yells. She waves the fingers of her right hand, unleashes her **Sea Moon Wheel**, and annihilated one.

However, the **Sea Moon Wheel** she launched missed the other one.

On top of that, because she is trying to wear her skirt with her left hand, she loses her balance. She falls in her underwear. Even though she went through the trouble of wiping herself clean, she got dirt onto her body again. The rabbit attacks the fallen Gunjou.

"Erhm, you idiot!?"

I kick the ground. The **Acceleration** switch has a short window of operation. My body's acceleration ends in the midst of it --- but, I manage to catch up to the rabbit.

"Wait up, you murderer rabbit!"

I swing my sword down at the rabbit's head from behind. Slicing off its ear.

With that, the rabbit is annihilated.

"All right."

But at that moment, my feet lands and steps onto her unworn skirt. I slip against the clothing and lose my balance.

"Eh? Oh oh."

I fall over. To top it off, I am falling on top of Gunjou, who is in her underwear, with sword about to pierce into her,

"Begone."

Frantically, I pull my hands back and the **Demon Sword** disappears. Because of that, I am unable to support my own body.

I fall on top of her, covering her body with mine.

My body adheres to hers.

Our faces are just about to bang into each other, but I twist my body aside, and somehow manage to avoid it.

Gunjou stares at me with a surprised face. Following that, her face gradually flushes red.

Expecting her outburst screaming right into my ears, I feel exasperated but,

"....."

She did not scream.

With her face beet red.....

"E-Erhm, sorry..... I was clumsy."

"Really man."

"..... t-thanks..... for saving me."

"Whatever, just hurry up and get dressed, would you?"

"Can you stand up without looking?"

"I'm already tired of looking."

"You've looked for so long that you are already tired of looking!? You, lecherous, pervert....."

"Ah ~ you're really annoying. The enemy's tough, so I really didn't have the leisure to keep up with your idiocy....."

"You big pervert droopy eyed man!"

"....." She is really annoying.

However, I feel a different presence at that moment. Footsteps that sound like someone is approaching. I tense my whole body, but,

"Hey, why the hell are you guys doing?"

The voice comes from the direction of the footsteps.

"Hn?"

"Eh?"

Gunjou and I look up.

Before us, stands a man who is wearing the uniform of 『Metropolitan Kichijouji High』. He has sharp, strangely red eyes. And gray hair.

It's Shiro.

Hishiro Shiro stands there, looking at us with a disgusted face. Seems like he's alive.

Shiro looks down at me and the Gunjou who's in her underwear pressed beneath me.

"..... ah ~, are you guys in that kind of relationship?"

On hearing that, I reply.

"We are just into the physical aspect of the relationship."

"Why are you telling such a lie!?"

Gunjou, who's pressed by me, hits my side.

Shiro smiles wryly and says.

"Which is the joke? Are you actually going out?"

Gunjou shouts.

"NOo! It's because the enemy attacked while I was wiping my body."

"And after that, things just happened?"

"NOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOO!"

Gunjou yells.

Shiro smiles. And then says.

"Well, it's great to see you guys so energetic. You managed to save Gunjou huh. I've thought that you would be able to do it if it's you."

"What's with that faith? When did you start having that kind of faith in me?"

"When you were hollering to Kiri about us being comrades."

"As usual, you're one annoying fellow."

"Haha."

Shiro laughs.

I sigh and try to stand up. But Gunjou clings onto me.

"H-H-Hey, if you stand up now, Shiro is going to see me naked."

"No one is interested in your naked body."

"That's not the point right!"

She shouts angrily. At any rate, I can't stand up with her clinging onto me. Slowly, slowly, Gunjou retreats behind my body. She pulls up her skirt with her legs. Wears her skirt.

At that point, I ignore her and stand up.

"Hey!"

While yelling, she turns her back to me and Shiro, and starts wearing her uniform.

Shiro says to that.

"Have you already done it?"

"Every night."

"Like I said, why are you making such a thing up!"

Gunjou hollers.

Shiro and I laugh.

Shiro then says in a small voice.

"This kind of teasing is fun."

I shrug my shoulders,

"By the way, where's Himi and Yousuke? Already dead?"

That possibility exists. Since the last time I could ascertain that they were still alive was a week ago.

Shiro then looks at me in delight and says.

"Oh, you are concerned about the well-being of your comrades?"

"....."

"Are you concerned about whether Himi and Yousuke are alive?"

"Aah whatever. Seems like they are still kicking from your manner of speaking."

But, Shiro's face becomes a little sad,

"..... they both died."

"Wha."

As my eyes widen, Shiro looks at me in great delight.

"You're pretty concerned about your comrades....."

I strike Shiro on the shoulder.

"Hahaha."

Shiro laughs.

"So, what's the situation?"

I say in a tired voice and Shiro replies.

"They're alive. They are in the safe zone on this floor."

"Safe zone..... but this is the 25th floor below right?"

"That's right, and what about it?"

Shiro says, to which I ask.

"Due to certain circumstances, I have the map of Apocalypse Alice inside me. The positions of the people inside one week ago were indicated on the map. And, you guys....."

"Yeah ~. You want to ask why we have been holding out on the 25th floor for a whole week?"

"Yeah. Is it because you are useless?"

Shiro smiles.

"Well, you can say that. Below this floor, the enemy suddenly becomes much stronger. Even though we can defeat them, with just the three of us, we can't advance much. Besides, we don't know the layout of the labyrinth."

"What about Himi's detection magic?"

"Like I mentioned, I got Himi to use her detection magic, we advanced forward, then Himi got lost, and we retreated back to the safe zone; rinse and repeat."

Well, that would probably happen if they didn't have the map.

However,

"The Valor team was on the 33rd floor a week ago you know?"

Shiro then smiles and says.

"We caught up with them; up till the 26th floor, we were still following behind stealthily. But, on the 26th floor, we were attacked by strong enemies and we lost them."

Kujaku's team also has lost more than half of their comrades by the time they reached the 33rd floor.

Given the difficulty level that could suppress both Shiro and Mitsutomo's hundred-men group, the labyrinth couldn't be a rank 15 one.

In other words, the rank of the labyrinth from here onward is unknown.

At that moment, from behind me, Gunjou who has finished dressing walks up to us. Maybe it's because she has been seen naked, or maybe it's because she feels unsociable since it's been a while since she has met Shiro, she glares at us with a sharp look that seems to indicate she's in a foul mood, and says.

"..... where's Himi and Yousuke?"

I shift my eyes down and reply.

"I heard they died."

"What!?"

That kind of surprised reaction.

The Hero team has already become an annoyingly buddy-buddy group.

Shiro says.

"Anyway, let's get to the safe zone. Both Himi and Yousuke will be pleased to know that both Shinnosuke and Gunjou are alive and well and have become lovers."

"Hey, so they are alive after all!?"

Gunjou hollers and glares at me.

Following that,

"And we aren't lovers!"

She busily turns her glare back to Shiro.

Shiro and I ignore her and start walking.

♦

"Hey, you guys are alive!?"

"Shinnosuke-san! Gunjou-san!"

Upon seeing us, Yousuke and Himi yell and run up to us.

Shiro then nods happily and says.

"On top of that, while we weren't looking, these guys....."

Before he can finish, Gunjou cuts him off and kicks him in the back.

"Ooucch. What the hell are you doing?"

"I already told you that you've misunderstood, didn't I?"

"But weren't you guys embracing each other while naked?"

Instantly,

"Eh!?"

"Eh!?"

Himi and Yousuke exclaim and look at us, but Gunjou's face turns beet red as she desperately refutes Shiro's claim.

"Like I told you, you misunderstood! Hey, Shinnosuke, you say something too."

"Ok. Like I said, our relationship is only physical....."

"NOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOO!"

She tries to hit me with all her strength but I dodge it. Smirking. Shiro too smiles in delight. It's fun to tease Gunjou but,

"Now's not the time to engage in such meaningless talk right?"

I say, to which Gunjou pouts.

"But....."

"No buts. This is the labyrinth you know? Stop messing around, would you?"

"The ones who are messing around are you guys!"

On hearing that, I look in the direction of Shiro.

"Were we messing around?"

"Nope."

"Y-You guys, I'll definitely kill you guys later, hear me!"

Himi looks troubled as she says.

"W-Well well, it's great news that everyone is well, we should get along....."

"I don't want to!"

Says Gunjou.

Yousuke looks at her and smiles.

"Well, seems like you are back to the usual Gunjou. That's great."

He is referring to her returning back to normal from the labyrinth disease. Though a month has gone by, a month ago, the goal of the Hero team was to separate Gunjou from the labyrinth disease and turn her back to human.

But yet, how did things come to this? Right now, we are inside the world's most difficult labyrinth, Apocalypse Alice.

On hearing Yousuke's words, Gunjou trembles with a start.

She looks at Yousuke.

She looks at Himi.

She looks at Shiro.

She looks at me.

Then,

"E-Erhm....."

She starts.

Of course, we know what she wants to say. The people here all came risking their lives to save Gunjou without any concern with personal gains.

Gunjou's face contorts in slight embarrassment,

"..... e-erhm..... I mean....."

But, cutting her off, Shiro says.

"Saving comrades is a given in my world. There's no need for words of thanks."

I look up at Shiro with half-opened eyes.

"Isn't that too cool?"

"I have always been cool."

"Shut up."

"Cos I'm too cool?"

"Super irritating."

"Haha."

Shiro laughs.

Himi too laughs.

Yousuke also laughs.

Every one of them is kind like a fool. While I feel spooked and have no idea why they are so kind towards strangers, anyhow, they are kind. Thus, they will probably die. Since kind people die in this world.

But Gunjou still said it.

"..... t-thanks. For coming to save me. I'm grateful."

Unlike me, Shiro didn't poke fun at it. He only acknowledges with a 'Uhn' and accepts her thanks with a smiling face. These fellows are really adults at heart and are really cool people. And regarding that,

"I'm really fed up with it."

Once again, I voice out my thoughts.

On doing that, maybe it's because he feels the same depression as me from Shiro's dazzling form, Yousuke says to me from the side.

"But surprisingly, I'm the more popular one you know?"

"I didn't ask about that."

Ah-haha, Himi laughs.

As before, with her face red, Gunjou looks away in embarrassment.

Really buddy-buddy.

Surely, if anyone here dies, I'll feel hurt. I want to distance myself from them now, but it's already impossible. These fellows had shamelessly gotten close to me, and kept clamoring about how we were comrades.

"....."

And I too am the same.

I ended up saving Gunjou, when there was no need for me to. Hollering embarrassing stuff about comrades, and saving her even without being asked to.

On top of that, the result of that, was that I ended up entering the labyrinth which should have been impossible to raid.

The instant I did something which I had been avoiding, the results showed up.

Even if that were purely a coincidence, I can no longer turn back from this path. I would still save Gunjou if there is a next time.

That is really an embarrassing thing.

But, even if it's embarrassing, I need comrades.

"..... sigh."

On hearing my sigh, Shiro asks.

"Why?"

"Nothing. I'm tired of this buddy-buddy stuff."

"Haha, but you were the lead in the pack causing this buddy-buddy stuff."

"....."

I can't deny it.

Shiro continues.

"But, even without Kiri, we have five people assembled. On top of that, Shinnosuke has the map of Apocalypse Alice inside his head, it seems."

Yousuke and Himi become surprised.

"For real! How did you get your hands on it?"

I reply.

"It's a long story, but we can trust it. At the very least, we managed to find our way here without getting lost even once."

Shiro nods.

"We have the map. We can form a formation of five. In that case, we can proceed forward. So, let's decide what we should do from hereon."

Of course, my thought is to raid Apocalypse Alice.

But Shiro looks at me,

"We have worked hard till this very day with the hope of meeting Kiri and getting her to undo her restraining magic on you. But, you woke up on your own and saved Gunjou. Then, I can no longer see any reason to take further risk to proceed forward."

He says.

Indeed, as what Gunjou had said, Shiro and the rest infiltrated Apocalypse Alice with the purpose of saving me and Gunjou.

In other words, for the past month, these fellows had been trying desperately to save even my life. Why did they do such a thing? Right now, I understand. Since if I were in the same situation, I would surely do the same.

I look at Shiro, and say.

"I won't say any thanks. You did say there's no need for words of thanks right?"

"For you, say it."

"I don't want to."

"A brat."

I am indeed a brat. But,

"I live with the principle of not saying thanks here."

"But you do feel like saying thanks?"

"....."

"You really are cute huh."

Shiro hits my back and laughs. With a look saying 'what do you think of this fellow's annoying personality?', I look to Gunjou seeking her empathy.

But for some reason, Gunjou has a smug look on her face and puffs her chest out,

"It should downright clear now that, since I said my thanks, I am more of an adult than you."

"Can someone with the height of an elementary school student just shut up?"

"What did you say!?"

Shiro continues.

"Thus we have two choices. Let's decide this together. Do we go after Kiri and ask her about her circumstance..... or do we all **Escape**?"

However, I can't **Escape**. I have to save my little sister.

To that,

"Say, since you are not planning to advance forward, why haven't you **Escaped** before?"

I ask.

Shiro then answers.

"Hn? About that, it's to save you....."

"But you have other choices right? You belong to some organization. Then, you could have gotten out, made preparations, then re-enter ---"

But, Shiro cuts me off and says.

"I probably can't re-enter. Otherwise, the Valor team wouldn't have brought in large amounts of supplies right?"

"Aah, so that's your conclusion huh. That's why you didn't **Escape**?"

"Yeah."

"For the sake of saving me?"

"That's right."

Shiro acknowledges straightly and all too readily.

I scowl.

"What's your purpose?"

Shiro smiles.

"You'd also do the same right?"

"I won't."

"Don't lie. We objected to saving Gunjou. But yet, you were the one who wanted to save Gunjou more than anyone else."

On hearing those words,

"Ah....."

Utters Gunjou.

But I don't want to continue the conversation down that path, so I say.

"But even so, there's no benefit to you right?"

"There is. I can save you. And when that happens, you will save me the next time."

"You want me to repay this debt?"

But Shiro smiles and says.

"You will return it on your own. That's the kind of guy you are."

"Don't make assumptions."

I say and look at Shiro. Following that, I recall the words Shiro said before entering this labyrinth.

"You can enter it alone and die by yourself. Or, maybe, it'd be fine for you to put up your solitary airs and achieve your grand ambition. At any rate, it's probably an ambition you can achieve by yourself, right?"

But those words couldn't possibly come out of someone without a great ambition. In other words, Shiro has a great ambition and needs strong comrades to accomplish that.

However, why did he need to go to the extent of risking his life to assemble comrades that he can trust?

What is he planning to do?

I ask.

"Hey Shiro."

"Hn?"

"Which organization do you belong to?"

On saying that, I can feel Himi and Yousuke behind tense up. Those two should be from the same organization.

Shiro replies.

"What happens if you know?"

"I can judge whether I can trust you or not."

"That sounds pretty high and mighty. But, to what end? What we've gone through together is what matters right? We are comrades."

But I did not listen to him, and look hard at Shiro.

"Speak."

Shiro glares at me.

"..... ha, I don't really want our friendship to be weighed using that."

Then, his fingers move into a shape, poised to employ magic. His thumb touches the pad of his middle finger. Once he snaps them, his 《**Headphone Fuzz**》 will activate.

I look at that. But, my fingers were done preparing.

Both our murderous intent fill our surroundings.

From the side, Gunjou says.

"Shiro, wait a minute. About Shinnosuke....."

But, I cut her off and say.

"Shut up Gunjou. I'll decide whether to say it or not."

Shiro looks at both me and Gunjou, then says.

"What's this? You told Gunjou your secret, but yet can't tell it to us?"

I reply.

"I already know her whole profile. Since it was given to us during our class."

"And, you knew that she wouldn't become your enemy so you told her?"

"That's right."

"Then, if after I tell you and it turns out that we are enemies, you will stop being our comrade?"

On hearing that, I ask.

"That's what I want to ask you. You have a great ambition which you have to risk your life for right? Then, if your interest is not aligned with mine, what would you do? Or, are you going to tell me that you would give up on your ambition and remain buddy-buddy with me?"

"Yeah."

Shiro nods readily.

I laugh derisively through my nose.

"I can't believe that."

He doesn't seem like someone who would act on an ambition of such level.

But Shiro says.

"Since you were the one who suddenly started this, you actually want to believe it right? Since you don't have enough power by yourself, you want us to become your comrades. In that case, speak. For what purpose did you come here for?"

I look hard at Shiro and reply.

"..... if I say it, and find out that you are my enemy, I will kill you."

"..... hm."

"But I don't want to kill you."

"I see."

"So..... you say it first."

"If so, please. Tell me your true identity."

I glare at Shiro. But, if he can know my identity if he gave his, he should say it.

So I say,

"..... I beg you, Shiro."

But Shiro stares at me,

"No."

He says.

"It's time for you to show that you trust us. Being able to get something through just begging alone only happens while you are still a kid. If you want comrades, be a comrade first. If you don't take a risk and leave a backdoor for yourself, don't think that you can obtain anything."

Shiro says.

But even so, I still shouldn't say it. My objective is to turn my little sister --- Apocalypse Alice back to human, which is an action that goes against the benefits of every single human being.

By now, the world organizations are already fearful of Apocalypse Alice. They all want to get their hands on Apocalypse Alice.

If they make use of Apocalypse Alice, they might even be able to conquer the world.

The organization that Shiro belongs to probably also wants to get hold of Apocalypse Alice.

Then, he's an enemy.

If I say it, then to Shiro, I will become a pawn that he can make use of. This will happen anyway. It'll definitely happen. Since only such a thing exists in the world.

"....."

But yet, even so, I want Shiro. I want him as a friend. I wonder when did I become so weak? Never had such a thing happened before. If I let others know my weakness, I won't be able to grow strong --- that should be what I had decided but yet, I,

"..... it's my little sister."

I may no longer be able to advance forward by myself.

"..... I want to save my little sister Arisu Saki."

Shiro answers without even appearing surprised.

"..... I see. I got it. I'll help you. Let's forget about **Escaping**."

Even though it's something that goes against the line of human benefit, but yet, he said that so readily.

On top of that, his face said that he knew. Well, that's obvious I guess. I didn't even change my family name. Even if I had changed it, an organization with someone as strong as Shiro would have been able to investigate me, so I didn't bother changing it. No, even without investigations, Shiro could have already guessed from my family name.

Thus, maybe I didn't really need to act like an ass. Since I already revealed to Shiro and the rest something which must not be revealed, that is, I possess the magic, **Holy Sword** switch, that can allow me to save labyrinth diseased girls.

Shiro says.

"With this, we are real comrades."

But I say.

"Not yet. I don't know your real identities yet."

Shiro then grins and says,

"Taikou Pharmaceuticals. We are here to keep an eye on you in order to get our hands on Apocalypse Alice."

"Wha."

"You are a fool. You let your mouth run loose and babble out what you shouldn't say. That's why you can't get your hands on anything."

On hearing that, I snap my fingers.

He's an enemy.

He's the worst enemy that I should not even allow close by in the first place.

Taikou Pharmaceuticals is a corporation which had conducted human experimentation on the labyrinth diseased Asahi Momoka, and forcibly made her into a labyrinth.

"**Demon Sword** switch."

I activate my magic. Swing my sword. The sword touches Shiro's neck, and I say.

"Why are you not dodging?"

"I should ask you too, why didn't you kill me?"

"....."

"See, even when our interests are not aligned, you couldn't kill me right? By the way, the thing about me being from Taikou Pharmaceuticals is a lie."

"..... huh?"

"But you didn't kill me. In other words, it doesn't matter to you where I belong to. You can't kill the comrades with whom you have risked your life together in the labyrinth."

"What the hell are you?"

I push my hand against Shiro's chest.

"What if I really cut you?"

"Well, I'll just die I suppose."

"Huuuuuhhh?"

"Besides, you didn't cut me. If you had intended to, you would have abandoned me to my death way before. I made a mistake in Asahi Momoka's labyrinth, and if you hadn't saved me, I would have died. We were strangers then. But yet, you saved me."

"....."

"A nice guy who saves a stranger, tries to act cool and wants to kill his comrades? Haha, don't make me laugh."

On hearing his words, I say tiredly.

"Well fine. Just as you said, I'm soft."

Shiro then says.

"Then we'll nickname you Softie."

Yousuke then quips in as well.

"Softie."

Himi too says.

"Ah, ah, erhm, I think I'd find the soft Shinnosuke-san way cooler, you know?"

Finding that cool = it's not embarrassing at all you know? = It's embarrassing but the mood is good and I'll console you telling you it's not embarrassing --- that's what it means.

"Buh-fuh."

Gunjou then laughs out behind me.

Anyhow, this is pissing me. I can't stop feeling pissed. It's the same when we were at the karaoke. These fellows did whatever they wanted with me, and even made me sing an enka in the end.

But, since there's no helping it whatever I say, I continue.

"I got it. It's fine then. It's fine so let's move on. So, who are you guys really?"

On hearing that, contrary to his previous defiant attitude, Shiro answers simply.

"I'm with America's Rorand Inc. It's a corporation connected to the military. My rank is Magician Third Major."

"Hm. So, why did you come to Japan?"

"It's because of a strange mission. It's a mission to pursue a mad scientist whose identity is unknown and who is maneuvering the world in the shadows."

But that's probably just a mission. There's no reason to risk his life and increase his comrades for the purpose of fulfilling that mission. Therefore, Shiro probably has another objective.

I ask.

"So, aside from your mission, what's your objective?"

"Hn? Ah, I'm here to completely take over a certain corporation....."

But, before he can finish, Shiro's words got cut off.

Because there is the sound of an explosion.

Followed by screams.

"I, I don't want to die!?"

"Noooooooooooooooooooo!?"

"Wait, wait, please, Kujaku-sama, please save me!?"

We turn around in the direction of the voice.

Right now, we are inside the safe zone behind a hidden door that forms part of a gigantic tree, but we can hear the screams of agony from outside.

Bang bang bang, our room shakes from the explosive sounds.

Gunjou says.

"That was....."

Shiro says.

"The Valor team is outside."

Yousuke says.

"What sound is that? Is the Valor team under attack from the enemy? Or, is it that Mitsutomo Group already has gotten their hands on the magic of Apocalypse Alice and the girl called Kujaku is killing off eye-witnesses?"

From the voices heard, that is a possibility too. It sounds like the voices are begging Kujaku for their lives.

In order to bring magic back from an eternal labyrinth, firstly, the labyrinth diseased girl needs to be restrained. Following that, the magic has to be sucked out of her body. The ingredients that would be turned into 'Magic Converted from Labyrinth Spoils' would be extracted from the girl.

She will definitely not be killed.

Since if she is killed, then the magic can't be extracted.

Thus, once she's restrained, she will be bounded for life inside the machine for sucking out magic. She will be used like a lab rat.

And, there is a possibility that Kujaku has restrained my little sister. She has plenty of time to do that.

Reason being, since the time I was knocked out, till the time I reached here, it has already 1 month and 1 week.

And, she has started killing the eye-witnesses.

She has started killing eye-witnesses in order to hog the power for herself.

In other words.

My little sister.

Has already been captured by Mitsutomo Group.

"Damn."

I am about to dash out of the safe zone. Shiro and Gunjou grab my shoulder and arm.

"Stop Shinnosuke!"

"Please stop Shinnosuke!"

"Let me go!"

I cry out.

Himi jumps out in front of me, and snaps her fingers,

"I'll start activating my detection magic to check....."

But, an explosion reverberated again right before us. The room shakes. The safe zone wall that's in front of us is blown apart.

The wall flies towards me and Himi,

"Kya."

"**Spider Legs** switch!"

Yousuke yells.

He spreads his hands apart, and deploys his protection magic.

Something resembling the eight legs of a spider appears, and threads start dancing out, creating a barrier of threads to protect us from the explosion.

If not that, we might have been thrown out and receive the full blast of explosion which would probably kill us.

Shiro says to me.

"Idiot! Teamwork first! Remember why we work so hard to act buddy-buddy and become comrades!"

Following that,

"That's right Shinnosuke. I understand how you feel, but please just come down!"

Gunjou says to me, and I brush both their hands aside.

"I get it!"

Gunjou hollers.

"You don't get it at all!"

Shiro pats my back and says,

"All right! If you get it, it's fine! The situation is chaotic, but we have five people with a balance in both offense and defense! If so, we'll be able to deal with it! Until we get a grasp of the situation, don't go out. Step back!"

Then, he yanks me from behind, and I fall back. Each and every one of us take our positions correctly.

The defensive magic specialist, Yousuke.

The melee offensive magic specialist, me.

The mid-to-long range offensive magic specialist, Gunjou.

Wide area destructive offensive magic specialist, Shiro.

Support magic specialist, Himi.

In this order, we take our positions.

Each and every one of us is too excellent, and despite such an abnormal situation, I can feel a sense of security that I have never felt before.

Comrades.

Meaningless friendships.

But yet, it is true that with such a group composition, we might be able to deal with almost any situation, I feel. Reason being, we have proven that none of us would stab another of us in the back.

And, if we add Kiri, who is balanced in both offense and defense, to Yousuke's side, our holes would even further decrease but ---

"..... I wonder whether Kiri has already been killed."

"Who knows."

Shiro replies. I look at the star marks on my armband. There are still five star marks, but right now, we have no idea what kind of situation we are in. Despite the fact that the wall has been destroyed, we are unable to see what's outside due to the cloud of sand that formed from the explosion.

Outside, the explosions continue on unchecked.

Shrieks can be heard.

"Noooooooooo!"

"I don't want to die!"

"**Escape** switch! **Escape** switch! **Escape** switch! Why! Why can't I activate my magic!?"

Voices like those.

Judging from that, the chance of the Mitsutomo Group getting massacred is getting higher and higher.

The subordinates' 《**Headphone Fuzz**》 could have been modified such that the **Escape** switch can't be used.

But in that case,

"I wonder whether our enemy just comprises of those few Valor team members we fought the other time?"

Says Yousuke.

In that case, we can take them on. At the very least, we won't lose. Even though Kiri is not with us, Gunjou is. Even in a head on clash, we won't get overwhelmed, I guess.

On top of that, we will launch a surprise attack on our opponents. The other side has yet to notice us.

I say.

"Isn't it better if we go out now? If they are massacring their own comrades ---"

Shiro says.

"If we save those subordinates who were deceived by Mitsutomo Group, then they might become our allies?"

"Yeah."

"That's a good point. But, that's provided that the Mitsutomom Group is massacring their comrades. If it's not....."

But, at that moment, Himi says.

"I have finished scanning the surrounding map! This is not a massacre!"

"Then what is it?"

Kimi replies to my query.

"In front, the labyrinth guardians --- more than 200 monsters are closing in! Only 8 humans are left! They are running away towards here!"

"Wha."

I look at the faces of my comrades.

Yousuke says.

"If we go out, we'll be killed. Leave the Kansai team....."

But Shiro cuts him off.

"What if Kiri is among the 8 people?"

"Then should we all die together!? Our comrades' lives are at stake. Evaluate this calmly, Shiro."

"Kuh."

Shiro looks at me and Gunjou.

It's a difficult call. Kiri might not be outside at all.

If we stay here, we might get through this alive.

But, the answer appears right away.

Himi says.

"The enemy has noticed us!"

"Damn!"

Shiro extends his right hand backwards,

"**Thousand Deities Flash Of Light** switch!"

He throws his spear at the wall behind us, in the opposite direction from where the enemy is closing in. A hole opens.

I bellow at that.

"We're getting out! Those who are alive link up, and escape to the upper level!"

I dash out of the room that's inside the gigantic tree.

Once I get out, the scenery outside enters my vision.

The sky is blue and clear, like that of good weather.

The sun rays shine down on us.

The grass plains are so empty that it feels refreshing with only the horizon in sight.

Those grass plains are stained bright with red.

It is stained with bright red blood of people.

The enemies that are closing in are soldiers with torsos in the form of playing cards, as expected of what you would find in "Alice in Wonderland".

All of them have heart marks. There are none with spades, clubs, or diamonds. Since my little sister Saki loves heart marks.

And as expected, they swing their spears with heart-shaped tips, tearing apart people.

By the time I come out, there are only three people left.

And I know the faces of all of them.

The members of Valor team named Mitsutomo Kujaku, Makoto, and Zakki.

Kiri is not among them.

I look at my armband.

On doing that,

"....."

A star mark has disappeared without me being the wiser.

My little sister probably killed her.

"Damn, damn, damn, damn!"

I groan. I glare at the labyrinths guards sent out by my little sister.

Several card soldiers raise their spears.

Kujaku stops in her tracks. Her uniform covered in blood. Navy blue long hair. Clear cold eyes.

Even in this situation, she remains calm and retains her beauty of high class, noble birth.

She calmly turns around, and straightens her back,

"..... haah..... I'm tired of running away. Makoto, Yamazaki, I'll hold them off here. Please escape."

She says.

Makoto turns around with a surprised face,

"N-No way, don't push yourself Kujaku-sama!"

"Let's escape together! If we just get away a little further, we might be able to use our **Escape** switch....."

But Kujaku ignores them. She just extends her left hand out. She adopts a pose as if she's pulling the drawstring of a bow,

"**Wailing Summer Rain** switch."

She says.

Then, in the sky, several gigantic arrows of light appear. They number around thirty. The scale looks so grand that if all of them rain down, it looks like they can take down about a hundred of the card soldiers.

It's an amazing magic.

Just like Shiro's magic, it is specialized offensive magic that probably needs time to activate, and because of its give-and-take nature, it probably requires her to sacrifice something and fulfill some difficult conditions before she can activate it.

But the card soldiers look up. And they all raise their spears at once. And throws them up at the sky.

At the same time, Kujaku hollers.

"Rain down!"

Instantly, the gigantic arrows fall like rain.

However, the spears clash with the arrows.

Explode.

Explode.

Explode.

The spears number two hundred.

But there are only thirty arrows.

Then, the sky clears up, and sadly, it seems like nothing came down.

The card soldiers look at Kujaku again.

Kujaku stands rooted, tiredly.

She has given up.

"..... it, didn't work..... it's my loss huh. We shouldn't have laid our hands on Apocalypse Alice yet."

About ten of the card soldiers ready their spears.

Kujaku does not resist.

Spears are thrown.

"..... **Acceleration** switch."

I murmur.

Instantly, my body accelerates from the magic.

In an instant, for a second, my speed is faster than even that of God. And I was before Kujaku in an instant.

"Wha....."

Kujaku exclaims in surprise.

I swing my **Demon Sword** switch. I have already seen the weak points of the spears. I brandish my sword at the points where I can ward off the spears.

I swing, swing, swing, swing my sword.

The spears got deflected before me, and explosions occur left and right. While the wind of the blasts reached me, the blast impact didn't.

On top of that, Shiro jumps out. He raises his right hand.

"**Thousand Deities Flash Of Light** switch!"

A gigantic rotating spear with a drill tip appears.

"Impale theeeeeeeeeeeeeemmm!"

And he throws it.

The card soldiers react and throw their heart spears at it, but the drill spins the spear as it pierces forward.

Doh-doh-doh-doh-doh-dohn, one by one, the spears clash with Shiro's spear and explode, but Shiro's spear does not disappear.

Shiro's magic is a type that unleashes great power in one shot.

The card soldiers are unable to render it inoperative.

The soldiers get bored by the drill. The drill explodes. Several card soldiers got annihilated.

But, that's about all. They are two hundred strong.

I turn around and say.

"All right, let's get out of here!"

Kujaku looks at me with a surprised face, and then says,

"Why are you....."

"It's not like I'm saving you. Curse you for abandoning Kiri..... but, we were also discovered. So....."

At that moment, Gunjou grabs the hair of Kujaku and says.

"Leave that for later, let's get out of here now!"

Kujaku's face then turns into even greater surprise.

"Gunjou, why are you still....."

But, we can no afford the leisure to talk.

This Valor team with Kujaku, Makoto and Zakki should be pretty strong. Then, if we join hands, and properly work together in guarding one another, there is a high possibility that we can get out of here.

Thus,

"Let's go!"

We are just about to dash off in a breath.

"....."

However, at that moment.

From behind me.

From among the card soldiers, the voice of a girl rings out suddenly.

"Ah, ah, you aren't allowed to escape."

On hearing that voice, I can no longer move. Because I know it. Because I know that voice. No, maybe the owner of that voice is using some kind of magic that is stopping my movements. To the extent that my body no longer listens to me.

My brain is brimming with adrenaline and my ears are ringing. My heart races madly. I can't remain calm.

"....."

I turn around.

The card soldiers make way as if someone's pushing her way through, and a girl appears from among them.

As if she came out from the illustrations in 'Alice in Wonderland', it is a girl who's wearing a cute dress.

I call out the name of that girl.

"..... Saki."

She has grown up. Her appearance looks like that of a eleven, twelve year old now. However, there's no doubt about it. She is Saki. My little sister.

Dragged along in the tight grip of the right hand of that little sister of mine, is the neck of Kiri. The star mark has disappeared, but Kiri is alive. She looks at us. Her face becomes teary as she looks at me. *Get out of here*, her lips move.

That would probably be the better choice. In this situation, there's no way I can save my little sister. I can't save Kiri as well. The place is too bad. Furthermore, my little sister is protected by large numbers of card soldiers.

Despite all this, my **Holy Sword** switch that I can use for the purpose of saving my little sister, has hardly any range. On top of that, I can't activate my **Acceleration** switch along with it; in the capacity of a weapon, there's no magic worse than this.

"....."

However, even so, I cancel the cursed song of **Acceleration** switch that's playing in my head, and change to a different song slot.

The song of **Holy Sword** switch starts playing in my head.

【*Deceiving the night ♪*

Beguiling the world ♪

The darkness that saves the girl of the endless night ♪】

It's the magic to sever a labyrinth diseased girl from the labyrinth.

I will save my little sister here.

I will save my little sister here.

Thus,

"..... sorry everyone. Please get out of here. I'll remain here."

I say.

Shiro then says behind me.

"What the heck are you talking....."

"My little sister's here! I..... I'll save, my little sister here....."

But, Gunjou comes standing beside me.

"Then, hurry up and do it!"

Shiro then goes on to say,

"For real? At this timing..... aah, but we might have a better chance at it than running away."

Yousuke too stands beside,

"Crap, damn you, if we survive this, I'll make sure you treat me lunch a hundred times!"

Then, the card soldiers raise their spears all at once. Facing us.

Kiri hollers.

"No! Get out of here! You can't win!"

We should really be fleeing.

There's absolutely no chance of winning. If the card soldiers' can be held with just these few people, Kujaku's team would have already done it I guess.

But, they were almost completely annihilated.

But they couldn't hold them off. In other words, our current action is the same as suicide.

But yet, my Hero team comrades surround me.

I say in exasperated voice.

"You guys are really morons."

Shiro then says.

"Not as moronic as you."

Gunjou says.

"For real."

Yousuke then says,

"Let's save that for later, hurry up and get going. Go finish it off!"

I then nod,

"**Holy Sword** switch."

While murmuring that, I start running.

A silver sword appears in my right hand. A shining sword shrouded by light. A sword of hypocrisy that resembles a sword that a hero carries.

The card soldiers turn to me and throw their spears at me.

But I didn't look at them. Since I can't do anything with the **Holy Sword** activated.

I am useless. I am defenseless. I am powerless.

But my comrades are with me now.

Shiro, Yousuke, and Gunjou protect me from the spears.

My little sister did not move.

She merely grins with a gentle looking face, and did not move.

I start swinging my sword at my little sister.

However, the card soldier that's just beside my little sister starts throwing his spear at me.

But,

"**Nine-Fold** switch."

Kiri says. A Japanese sword appears in her hands and blocks the spear of the card soldier. The spear explodes, but Kiri's sword absorbs all of the blast impact.

With that, I reach my little sister.

After spending ten years, I finally reach her.

Shiro yells.

"Do it!"

Gunjou yells.

"Please do it!"

Yousuke yells.

"Just do it idiot!"

Himi yells.

"Please!"

Kiri says with a completely limp, exhausted face.

"..... Shi-Shinnosuke-kun."

In order to answer their calls, I swing my '*Holy Sword* down at my little sister ---

♦

In the next instant.

With the power of the **Holy Sword**, I enter the heart of Saki.

The inside of my little sister is pitch dark.

Deep inside the darkness, Saki sits alone.

She sits hugging her legs to her chest.

The same as Gunjou and Asahi Momoka.

I call out to Saki.

"Saki."

She then looks up.

"Ah ~, you finally came. Onii-chan. I've been waiting."

She says familiarly, as if she's waking me up from my morning snooze.

I shrug my shoulders.

"Sorry."

"I've been waiting for ten years."

"Yeah."

"Even though I can't sleep in a dark room by myself, this place never has any lights, and it's always dark you know!"

"Then you never even sleep a wink?"

"No. I do sleep when I get tired though."

"You do sleep huh."

"But because you weren't here Onii-chan, I got really sleep-deprived."

She says with an angry face.

Like before, she has a naive, innocent, cheery face. No but, she really has grown up a little. She's also taller.

"Sorry. I'm late."

I say again.

Saki then smiles and shakes her head.

"But since I'm kindhearted, I'll forgive you. Onii-chan, you really did come after all."

"..... well, even though I really gave it my all to reach here, you know?"

"I saw. Onii-chan, you've been shedding tears, hollering, and wanted to give up many times, but still, you work hard and made it here; I've been watching all this while."

I cock my head on hearing that.

"Y-You can see all that?"

Saki then smiles.

"I can. After all, my disease infected you that time."

"Eh?"

"And, didn't we make put together our plan time and time again in your dream?"

"Plan.....? What, are you talking....."

"About how to turn the whole world into a labyrinth. About how to turn everything into Apocalypse Alice. About how we can encroach the whole world with the sickness of us Arisu siblings. We talked about those stuff."

"Wait, you....."

My little sister stands up, and approaches me.

I take a step backward.

"And, with the blueprint I gave you, you managed to complete the **Holy Sword** switch right?"

"What on earth are you say....."

"Onii-chan, you don't need to worry about anything else, so just quickly cut me. Then, I'll be set free. Away from this labyrinth, to the outside world. A labyrinth diseased girl will be able to roam freely outside. The human world will then end. Since I will encroach the outside world and turn all of it into a labyrinth."

My little sister grabs my arm.

"Let me go."

But, my little sister didn't let go. She merely smiles innocently,

"I'm the stronger one here, so you can't go against me, Onii-chan."

My right hand that is holding the **Holy Sword** is grabbed. Slowly, Saki brings the sword closer and closer to her neck.

"Stop."

I say but she says in return.

"Don't you want to save me?"

"I want to save you."

"Then cut me."

"But, you aren't Saki."

"Fuh-fuh-fuh, I am Saki."

"Who are you?"

Then, my little sister replies.

"Alice. Apocalypse Alice --- isn't that the name you humans gave me? That's why I made the labyrinth that way. And the world will become like it too. So that everyone can stay in the world of the fairy tale country....."

"Release my little sister!"

I bellow.

But Saki just smiles. Smirkingly. That face may bear a little resemblance to mine.

Then she says,

"But with this, Onii-chan, your role has ended."

She then wrenches the **Holy Sword** switch towards her.

And cuts the skin of her neck.

My little sister then smiles sadly and following that ---

"See you, Onii-chan. I love you."

That was all she said and she disappeared.

With that, it ended.

Everything ended.

I can only murmur,

"What in the world happened....."

But no answer came.

My little sister had told me that the **Holy Sword** switch is a magic made under the direction of the labyrinth disease that had infected me.

Then, I couldn't save Saki?

My little sister disappeared, and in concert with that, the darkness in my surroundings also starts to vanish.

But, right now, I did not know what I had done.

Did I save my little sister?

Or, did I end up doing something that cannot be undone?

With those questions still in my mind, I was driven out of Saki's heart ---

♦

"....."

I return to consciousness.

As I open my eyes wide, the scenery before me is not that of the inside of the labyrinth.

It's reality.

I have returned to the real world.

It's noon on the outside world.

The blue sky can be seen.

The clamors of the streets.

Zoom of the cars.

Voices of people.

Saki's labyrinth --- Apocalypse Alice disappeared, and this place has turned back into the streets.

"Shinnosuke!"

I can hear Gunjou's shout.

I turn around, and there stood the figures of my comrades.

Gunjou's there.

Shiro's there.

Himi's there.

Yousuke's there.

Kiri lies tired on the ground looking up at me.

On top of that, Kujaku, Makoto, and Yamazaki are also there.

They are saved. All of them are saved.

Shiro says.

"You did it. You finally saved your little sister."

But I can't answer him. I can't think of that as successfully saving her. Besides, if I did save her, where is my little sister?

I look around me, searching for my little sister. But what's around me is just the scenery of a normal reality.

Taxis and trucks driving along the roads.

Old lady walking her dog.

A female jogger.

However, behind that girl,

"....."

Is a strange lifeform.

A rabbit.

In the real world, a rabbit stands in a suit with a finely woven heart. It takes out a pocket watch with its right paw, looks at it and says.

"Yaah yaah, yaah yaah."

All the members of the Hero team notice it.

They look at the rabbit.

Then, behind the rabbit, a large-sized bus explodes, and turns over. A single soldier with the body of a card stands beside it.

Further away, in the sky, some gigantic creature resembling the shape of a dragon is flying.

What a ridiculous sight. A dragon from fairy tales is flying above a building in the real world, invoking a strongly eerie, unpleasant feel.

On top of that, several missiles come flying from somewhere, striking down the dragon.

Shiro looks at that and says.

"What, is that?"

Gunjou says.

"What in the world has happened.....?"

But I recall the words that my little sister just told me.

"Then, I'll be set free. Away from this labyrinth, to the outside world. A labyrinth diseased girl will be able to roam freely outside. The human world will then end. Since I will encroach the outside world and turn all of it into a labyrinth."

The labyrinth disease.

The diseased girl has started encroaching the outside world.

The rabbit that's in this real world holding a pocket watch looks at us and says.

"Yaah yaah humans, it's time."

Claws extend from its left paw.

"Time to die."

And from that day onward, our world changed drastically.

Afterword

All right, here's "Apocalypse Alice 3".

How do you find it?

How should I put it, to me, it's really fulfilling.

The reason is because, for me, the speed of the plot advancement is as what I had in mind during the conception stage, which is a rare thing. Thus, I thought it might be nice to leave things at dramatical parts as we move to the next volume --- I grin to myself in a self-satisfied manner but, how was it!? (what will happen if I can't satisfy everyone --- LOL)

And also, actually, for Apocalypse Alice, compared to all my works to date like The Legend of the Legendary Heroes and Itsuka Tenma no Kuro Usagi, my writing style has changed a little (well, it's the first time I'm writing a in first-person narration) --- using a little shorter segments, I tried to make it such that wherever you read, you will find surges and swings.

Recently, during my discussion with my editor, we thought it might be also because of embarking on writing the script of the "Seraph of the End" manga which is serialized in Jump SQ.

In the manga script, the story composition and development must be done in 45 pages (in manuscript paper, it's only 20 sheets), and any unnecessary things will be cut; and I'm writing this every month.

This is reflected in my novel, and I can feel that the speed at which the story advances is getting faster.

And also, because I'm also working on a manga, more picturesque POV might have made it into my story as well, I feel.

But but, even though I don't whether that's good or bad, because there's actually merit in a slower-paced show and tell in novels, I try to combine the best of the two! And that's what I'm challenging myself in Apocalypse Alice but how is it!

More importantly, since I'm trying new stuff in this work, I might as well try a lot of difficult stuff at once and maybe it's because of that, I really enjoyed writing it. (Like Game-like stuff, like Headphone Fuzz, like battles! It's quite a lot of work to try to condense concisely the large amount of lore (LOL))

Jeez, I'm writing it while enjoying myself with the large list of new things.

If everyone finds it fun, there's nothing more blessed than that!

Ah, but, even though I manage to advance the plot with what I had in mind, it's crazy to have the characters get sidelined from the plot. I'm the type of author that gets pulled along by the characters, and thus, despite I'm doing such a crazy thing, I'm really touched when I managed to insert the stop points of the plot satisfactorily, rather, the starting points.

Myyyyyyyyy thank heavens.

I definitely won't do this in future! (Ehh)

And thus, the real story of Apocalypse Alice is going start from here!

Please continue your support!

And also, the comic version of Apocalypse Alice that's serialized in Comic Gene mag is going to have the first volume on sale some days after this book goes on sale!

↓ Here!

I heard from my editor that we're going to put an ad page here but!

Like real!

It's not one page, but a two-page spread ad came from Comic Gene, and we have to make adjustment to the page, and thus I have to write one additional page of afterword, and right now I'm desperately filling it up!

Erhm, so what should I fill with? Erhm, ah, up until yesterday, because of the needs of upcoming development in Seraph of the End, I went to Nagoya to do location hunting. Location hunting sounds like a term that the business world uses so I wanted to try using it so I wrote 'location hunting'. The truth is, I went to take pictures, eat miso udon, and wrote my manuscript in a hotel.

For Apocalypse Alice, the stage is at Kichijouji, so it's a breeze to do location hunting near my home!

And blah blah blah, I manage to fill up the page!

All right, this time for real!

In just a few more days, the comic version of Apocalypse Alice will go on sale, and this is how it feels! ↓

I heard the polls at Comic Gene were pretty good. I did it! Everyone, thanks for supporting me!

Please also support the comic!

The manga version has its own charm, and it's really wonderful!

And thus, with the ad done, that's all folks.

Please continue supporting Apocalypse Alice!

Kagami Takaya